



PETA

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

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September 9, 2003

Nelson L. Garnett, Director
Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare
National Institutes of Health
Rockledge Bldg. One
6705 Rockledge Dr.
Bethesda, MD 20892-7965

Dear Dr. Garnett:

In January 2003 we sent a complaint to OLAW about Columbia University's treatment of baboons in a stroke experiment run by E. Sander Connolly, Jr., as well as a request that OLAW review the health care records of dogs and pigs used by principal investigators Oz and Wang. We are writing again about Columbia's failure to comply with federal regulations and guidelines for animal care.

We request that OLAW review animal care records for baboon 6533, used in Raymond Stark's experiments into the effects of nicotine on fetal development. We have learned that baboon 6533 lost 40% of her body weight and that she developed osteomyelitis which Dr. Popilikis failed to treat.

We are also told that Harry Acosta, a veterinary technician in Columbia's ESS told another employee to falsify the records of a nonhuman primate to reflect that the animal was euthanized when in fact he or she had been found dead in the cage. This would have happened on or around February 4, 2003 after surgery was performed on the animal. Dr. Dell'Orto tells us that she reported this to Dr. Sohn who told her that the employee had to report the incident to him directly in order for it to be acted upon.

We have also learned that technicians were instructed by Dr. Popilikis to place expired drugs in the women's bathroom because he knew that Dr. LoPinto would not enter that area during his inspections.

We know that the USDA and the university have decided to claim that no deviations from the protocols were found during the investigation into the previous complaint. This is astounding given the fact that every protocol demands appropriate post-surgical care for animals and the investigation found that inadequate care had been given to 11 out of 23 animals. In the case of the baboons used in stroke studies, it is clear that the protocol was violated in critical areas.

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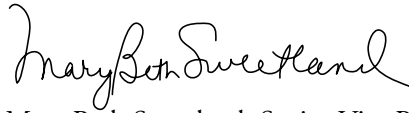
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While we understand that it is difficult for the NIH or any other institution that defends animal experimentation to admit that a federally-funded university that is supposed to have a certain degree of prestige can so miserably mistreat animals and misspend tax dollars by carrying out such shabby experiments, it is time to take serious action against Columbia. Given its history of noncompliance with the minimal federal standards for animal care, it does not deserve to be coddled and given yet another chance.

The animal experimentation program at Columbia must be suspended. The university must do a thorough housecleaning, it must find a competent veterinarian, and it must find decent support staff. The shabby program at Columbia can no longer be supported by a government and public strapped for funds.

We look forward to receiving the results of OLAW's investigation. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Beth Sweetland".

Mary Beth Sweetland, Senior Vice President
Director, Research & Investigations Department

cc: Robert A. Willems, DVM
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