

**Public comments: Formation of Translational Medicine and Therapeutics (TMAT)
Program at NIH
Submitted by The Humane Society of the United States
December 7, 2010**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed formation of a center focused on translational medicine at the National Institutes of Health. The development of effective drugs and therapies is an important goal and of great interest to the general public, as well as to The Humane Society of the United States and our 11 million supporters.

Given the mandate and activities of the Scientific Management Review Board, the TMAT working group, and the subsequent relevance to the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR), this is an opportune time to draw attention to a program currently overseen by NCRR that is costly and ineffective—namely, the warehousing and use of chimpanzees in invasive research.

According to the TMAT, one goal is to promote “quick win, fast-fail paradigms” but the chimpanzee model is the very antithesis of a quick-win, fast-fail paradigm. Cutting-edge activities, such as high throughput screening programs (e.g. TRND, MLI) carried out by the NIH Chemical Genomics Center, are exciting, effective and forward-looking—chimpanzee research is expensive, of dubious effectiveness, and regressive.

NIH owns approximately 500 (and “supports” another 250) of the 1000 chimpanzees in laboratories today. According to Sally Rockey, Deputy Director of Extramural Research, \$63 million was spent on chimpanzee research and maintenance in the most recent year. The reality is that an estimated 80-90% of these chimpanzees are not being used at any given time and, instead, are simply being warehoused at great expense to NIH.

The failure of the chimpanzee model for HIV research has been recognized and the pharmaceutical industry is now shifting away from chimpanzee use in the development of hepatitis C vaccines and treatments.

Different institutes and centers within NIH have been managing the government-owned chimpanzee colony at cross purposes at taxpayer expense. For example, NCRR has a policy against the breeding of federally-owned and supported chimpanzees, yet NIAID is funding the breeding of federally-owned and supported

chimpanzees—with each chimpanzee produced resulting in a \$1 million future commitment by NIH for his/her life-time care.

The HSUS requests that the Scientific Management Review Board recommends:

1. that NCRR's policy against the breeding of federally-owned and supported chimpanzees be implemented immediately NIH-wide and be properly enforced;
2. that chimpanzee research and warehousing in laboratories be phased out and that all government-owned chimpanzees be retired to the national chimpanzee sanctuary system, starting with the 186 chimpanzees who are currently residing at the Alamogordo Primate Facility and haven't been used in almost 10 years. This will save money and provide the chimpanzees with a better life; and
3. that oversight of the national chimpanzee sanctuary system (and associated funding) be shifted to the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare.

Adoption of these recommendations would not only free up valuable resources for the development of effective therapies but would save chimpanzees from suffering and give them a life that they deserve after decades (for many of them) spent in laboratories.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Conlee
Director of Program Management
Animal Research Issues