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The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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13 August 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

We write as scientists and professionals dedicated to accelerating medical progress. To tackle the 'seven great healthcare challenges' set out in the Government's Life Sciences Vision (Cancer, Dementia, Mental Health, Obesity, Ageing, Respiratory Disease and Vaccines), we believe that medical research urgently needs to be modernised.

We were encouraged to read in recent media reports that the Government plans to launch a review which will focus on replacing the use of animals in the development of medicines.

We believe this is an extremely important step since replacing animals with human-relevant techniques is vital to modernising medical research.

However, this review must be accompanied by bold policy action, such as developing a concrete plan to phase out animal experiments and phase in a modern, high-tech, human-specific approach.

The current reliance on animals is holding back medical progress. Significant differences in our genetic makeup and in biology mean that data from animals often cannot be reliably translated to humans. These problems play a significant role in the productivity crisis that currently is affecting the pharmaceutical industry.

Greater than 92 per cent of drugs that show promise in animal tests and that proceed into human clinical trials fail to get to clinic, mostly for reasons of poor efficacy and safety that were not predicted by animal testing. While several thousand diseases affect people, only around 500 can be treated.

Evidence showing the outright failure and lack of human relevance of animal tests has been widely published in the scientific literature for countless areas of research, including HIV/AIDS vaccines, Hepatitis C vaccines, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Crohn's diseases, stroke, motor neurone disease, cancers, brain injury, sepsis, depression, and many more.

There is a range of cutting-edge, non-animal methods that could be used to replace animals, in many areas of research and testing, to acquire results that are much more relevant to

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humans. These include the use of human cells or tissues, organ-on-a-chip technology, stem cell technology, and *in silico* (computer based) modelling approaches.

One example of such work is a project funded by Animal Free Research UK, which used human pancreatic beta cell lines. Professor Lorna Harries and Dr Nicola Jeffery at University of Exeter Medical School studied the mechanisms underlying type 2 diabetes. First, they discovered that a proportion of the beta cells in the pancreas that produce insulin are not dying but are changing into other types of cells. They then discovered that this transformational process can be reversed, which could soon lead the way to treatments that will cure the condition. This discovery wouldn't have been possible in mice as the cell types and mechanistic targets involved are distinct.

We call on the Government to take the following decisive action:

First, acknowledge the need to move towards the implementation of animal-free, human-relevant models of disease and make a clear commitment to doing so. Second, develop and publish a detailed plan, with timetables and milestones, setting out how human-focused methods will be phased in, and animal experiments phased out. Third, since this issue has a significant impact on public health and requires attention at the highest levels of Government, appoint a dedicated minister to facilitate this transition.

If the Government is willing to take bold and decisive action to modernise medical research, Britain will stand the best possible chance of further enhancing its position as a global leader in the life sciences and improving the lives of patients and their families.

Signed by:

****Please note that the letter illustrates the view and opinion of the signatories but not necessarily of their associated organisations***

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Animal Free Research UK

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Naturewatch Foundation

The Animal Interfaith Alliance

Oltre la Sperimentazione Animale (Beyond Animal Experimentation), Italy

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OneKind

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FOUR PAWS UK

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Humane Society International

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