

A CALL TO MODERNISE MEDICAL RESEARCH FOR THE BENEFIT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



AN OPEN LETTER TO

1. Prime Minister 2. Chief Scientific Adviser 3. Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy 4. Home Office
5. Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs 6. Department of Health and Social Care

We write as scientists and professionals dedicated to accelerating medical progress. 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.

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. 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.

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 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.

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.

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