

NIH Research Involving Chimpanzees

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Key Dates

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Purpose

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is informing the research community that it accepts the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in its report *Chimpanzees in Biomedical and Behavioral Research: Assessing the Necessity*. As a result, NIH announces that it will not fund any new projects for research involving chimpanzees while the Agency considers and issues policy implementing the IOM's recommendations.

BACKGROUND

The use of animals in research has enabled scientists to identify new ways to treat illness, extend life, and improve health and well-being. Chimpanzees are our closest relatives in the animal kingdom, providing exceptional insights into human biology and the need for special consideration and respect. While used very selectively and in limited numbers for medical research, chimpanzees have served an important role in advancing human health in the past. However, new methods and technologies developed by the biomedical community have provided alternatives to the use of chimpanzees in several areas of research.

In December 2010, the National Institutes of Health commissioned a study by the Institute of Medicine to assess whether chimpanzees are or will be necessary for biomedical and behavioral research. The IOM now has issued its findings, with a primary recommendation that the use of chimpanzees in research be guided by a set of principles and criteria. The committee proposed three principles to analyze current and potential future research using chimpanzees.

1. That the knowledge gained must be necessary to advance the public's health;
2. There must be no other research model by which the knowledge could be obtained, and the research cannot be ethically performed on human subjects; and
3. The animals used in the proposed research must be maintained either in ethologically appropriate physical and social environments (i.e., as would occur in their natural environment) or in natural habitats.

Based on its deliberations, the IOM committee concluded that "while the chimpanzee has been a valuable animal model in past research, most current use of chimpanzees for biomedical research is unnecessary." The committee also concluded, however, that the following areas may continue to require the use of chimpanzees: some ongoing research on monoclonal antibody therapies, research on comparative genomics, and non-invasive studies of social and behavioral factors that affect the development, prevention, or treatment of disease. The committee was unable to reach consensus on the necessity of the chimpanzee for the development of prophylactic hepatitis C virus vaccine. While the committee encouraged NIH to continue development of non-chimpanzee models and technologies, it acknowledged that new, emerging, or re-emerging diseases may present challenges that may require the use of chimpanzees.

ACTIONS

NIH accepts the IOM recommendations contained in the report: *Chimpanzees in Biomedical and Behavioral Research: Assessing the Necessity*.

Effective immediately, NIH will not fund any new or other competing projects (renewal and revisions) for research involving chimpanzees and will not allow any new projects to go forward with NIH-owned or -supported chimpanzees. This policy will be in place until NIH issues further policy implementing the IOM's recommendations. NIH will be assembling a working group of the NIH Council of Councils to provide advice on implementation of the IOM recommendations, and to consider the size and placement of the active and inactive populations of NIH-owned or -supported chimpanzees.

IMPLEMENTATION

NIH is committed to conducting and supporting high-quality science in the interest of advancing public health, and to the humane care and use of animals used in NIH-supported research. Pending the implementation of the IOM recommendations and issuance of further policy:

- ε Ongoing NIH-supported research: Ongoing research involving NIH-owned or -supported chimpanzees will be reviewed on a project-by-project basis by the NIH working group to assess whether it meets the IOM principles and criteria. It is expected that projects that are found to not to meet these criteria will be phased out, but in a fashion that preserves the value of research already conducted. Until the NIH working group has made these assessments and further policy issued, currently funded research may continue. Further, NIH will not consider requests for either administrative supplements or revisions to any projects that include costs for, or involve chimpanzees until further policy is issued.
- ε Submitted competing applications: Applicants may choose to withdraw pending competing applications which include chimpanzees. These applications could be resubmitted after the issuance of further policy. If not withdrawn, any applications previously submitted to the NIH which propose to use chimpanzees, will complete peer review but will be held for funding decisions pending the implementation of the IOM recommendations and issuance of further policy. At that time, highly ranked applications can be modified, as necessary, to comply with further policy, or be withdrawn. To withdraw a pending competing application, a letter requesting this action should be submitted by an Authorized Organizational Representative of the applicant institution to the Division of Receipt and Referral, Center for Scientific Review. The letter should be counter-signed by the PD/PI and identify the PD/PI, application title, and NIH-assigned grant number and faxed to 301-480-1987.
- ε Competing applications pending submission: NIH will not accept applications for research proposing to use chimpanzees until NIH issues further policy implementing the IOM's recommendations. At that time, all subsequent requests for funding that include research involving chimpanzees must comply with further policy.

Inquiries

For questions regarding a specific application please contact the NIH program officer associated with the application or proposal.

General inquiries about this change may be directed to:

E-mail : GrantsInfo@od.nih.gov

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