



Physicians Committee

for Responsible Medicine

2014 Progress Report

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I. Alternatives to Animals in Medical Education

Since our inception in 1985, the Physicians Committee has worked to end the use of animals in medical education. As a result of our efforts, only four schools in the United States now use animals to teach physiology or basic surgical techniques. Over the years, we have reached into other areas of medical training – pediatrics and emergency medicine residencies, military combat trauma training, and Advanced Trauma Life Support – to end the exploitation and suffering of animals and promote better training methods for medical professionals. Below is an update on our most recent campaigns.

- Victory at Oregon Health & Science University School of Medicine (OHSU): In early June, the Physicians Committee received a letter from the associate dean of undergraduate medical education at OHSU informing us that the school had ended its use of animals in medical education. With this decision, we ended a long-term campaign to remove animals from the school's medical student curriculum.
- Victory at Southern Illinois University (SIU): In May, we learned that SIU canceled its plan to use live animals in its emergency medicine residency program and will instead continue using human-relevant methods. This decision comes after the Physicians Committee demonstrated on the SIU campus, filed a petition with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and generated more than 34,000 e-mails to the university president through an action alert.
- Victory at SUNY Upstate Medical Center (Syracuse, N.Y.): Following a Physicians Committee complaint to the USDA for alleged violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act, SUNY Upstate announced to the press that it had halted the use of animals in its emergency medicine residency program in favor of “more valuable teaching methods.”



photo: CAE Healthcare

Animals in Medical Research

Saving Dogs from Heart Failure Experiments

Our campaign against the gruesome heart failure experiments being conducted on dogs at Wayne State University in Detroit, Mich., gained momentum this year when we received support from a statewide attorney organization and a cardiologist teaching at Wayne State. At our request, the Animal Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan sent a letter to the Wayne State Board of Governors asking for an end to the experiments. The section chair referred to the experiments as “scientifically unsound” and “unnecessary to improving public health.”

Joined by volunteers from across Michigan, we handed out nearly 6,000 leaflets at the school’s commencement ceremonies in May. Dr. Joel Kahn, a cardiologist and Wayne State faculty member, signed an open letter to Michigan residents, printed on the leaflets, stating that the experiments have done nothing to advance our understanding of heart disease. The *Detroit News* also published an op-ed by Dr. Kahn. Over the last 12 months, Physicians Committee members and others sent more than 100,000 e-mails and petitions to Wayne State University protesting the experiments.

The Physicians Committee presented a scientific critique of the experiments to the Board of Governors and has sent a report to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, which funds the experiments. Our billboard advertisement on the busy interstate highway near the campus was covered by the *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News*.

When we learned that some of the dogs used in experiments had been named after television characters, we reached out to the celebrities who played them. Actress Penny Marshall, who played the character Laverne on *Laverne & Shirley*, sent a letter to the school’s president, and other celebrities have also agreed to assist in the campaign.



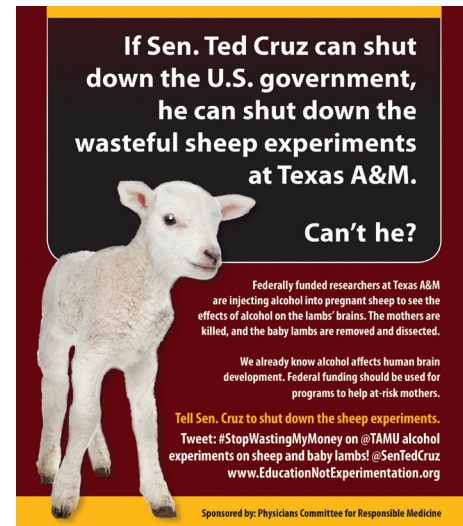
Ending the Use of Animals in Alcohol Abuse Experiments

The Physicians Committee is waging a campaign to end the use of animals in alcohol abuse research on three fronts: We target specific experiments, strive to educate researchers, and advocate for changes in federal funding policy.

This year, we conducted a media campaign opposing experiments conducted on sheep at Texas A&M University. There, experimenters surgically inserted catheters into pregnant sheep, injected the animals with alcohol, and later killed them. Their near-term lambs were removed and their brains were dissected to study fetal alcohol syndrome in human infants. Fetal alcohol syndrome cannot be accurately modeled in an animal.

Local print media and the NBC TV affiliate for Bryan/College Station/Waco in Texas covered the campaign. In response to a member alert, Texas A&M received more than 48,000 e-mails from people across the country.

In July, our commentary, “Alcoholism and Mental Illness: Overlapping Diseases Requiring a Renewed Focus,” was published in the journal *Mental Health and Substance Abuse*. In September, one of PCRM’s scientists spoke before the scientific advisory council of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), which funds hundreds of millions of dollars in animal experiments each year. In an effort to reform NIAAA, the Physicians Committee is planning to hold a scientific roundtable in February that will bring together influential people from the areas of laboratory research, human-based research, and bioethics. The goal of this roundtable is to develop a strategy to influence NIAAA funding policies.



Saving Puppies from Rabies Experiments

After an outbreak of a new strain of rabies in ferret badgers, the Taiwanese government announced plans last year to conduct experiments on beagle puppies to determine if the virus could spread between species. The Physicians Committee communicated with embassy staff and Taiwanese legislators, mobilized our membership, and, with the support of Maggie Q, Alec Baldwin, Ellen DeGeneres, and others, conducted an aggressive international media campaign. Members of the Economic Affairs Committee of the Taiwan Council on Agriculture received more than 31,000 e-mails as a result of our action alert and more than 85,000 signatures on our petition from people around the world.

In May, Physicians Committee staff traveled to Taiwan to partner with local organizations in a grassroots movement to halt the experiments. Our efforts were successful. The government has shelved its plans to infect beagle puppies with the deadly rabies virus.



III. Alternatives to Animals in Product Testing

Holding the Pesticide Industry Accountable

Although in vitro (test tube) test methods for determining skin and eye irritation/corrosion and skin sensitization have been validated by the European Union, the United States persists in requiring animal tests due to resistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the pesticide industry's trade association, CropLife America. In February, the Physicians Committee sent a letter to CropLife warning the company that the window of cooperation was closing. The implied threat of a public campaign motivated CropLife to agree to a meeting, which was held on May 20.



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The Physicians Committee brought key stakeholders to the meeting, including BASF, DuPont, Dow Chemical, Syngenta, the EPA, and the Canadian Pesticide Management Authority. The attendees all agreed to replace these three animal tests within the next two years. The Physicians Committee is playing a central role in this project and has also begun to develop international support for this effort through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and ICATM (an association of other international organizations).

Providing International Leadership

As Secretariat of the International Council on Animal Protection (ICAPO), an international coalition of 10 public health and animal protection groups with invited expert status at the OECD, the Physicians Committee works on guidance documents, test guidelines, and other projects to replace, reduce, or refine the use of animals in protocols for chemical testing guidelines and regulatory programs in 34 countries.

This year, ICAPO successfully fought a proposal to double the number of animals used for certain toxicity tests and to speed the acceptance of two new in vitro tests. The EPA and United Kingdom also asked ICAPO to collaborate on projects to replace the infamous Draize eye test and the acute dermal Lethal Dose 50% test (LD_{50}). In the Draize eye test, potentially harmful chemicals are applied to the eye of a restrained, conscious animal. Typically, experimenters use albino rabbits because they have no tear ducts, preventing them from naturally diluting or washing away the chemical. The eye is then observed for a period of 14 days for potential effects including redness, swelling, discharge, ulceration, hemorrhaging,

cloudiness, or blindness. The LD₅₀ test assesses the ability of a substance to cause death to half of the animals (typically rabbits) within two weeks after chemical exposure on the skin. Clinical signs of toxicity include lesions, other signs of skin damage, diarrhea, bleeding from the mouth, convulsions, seizures, paralysis, and death. No painkillers are provided.

Under our leadership, ICAPO is focusing its efforts in areas that are particularly urgent, which affect a large number of animals, and where we have the best chance of rapidly producing results.

Computerized Test Methods

The importance of computerized methods in replacing animal tests cannot be overstated. Computer models will speed the risk assessment of thousands of chemicals and provide more accurate results. The Physicians Committee is a member of an international team working to develop these methods and hasten their acceptance. And we are training scientists from all over the world in how to apply these methods in their daily work.

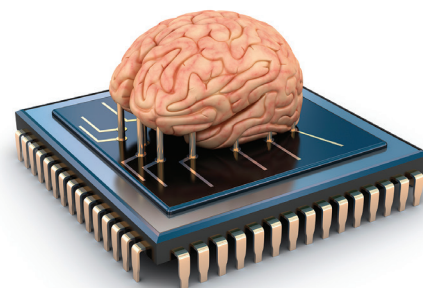


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Skin Sensitization Replacement Methods

The potential skin sensitization of a chemical is currently assessed by painting it on the skin of mice or guinea pigs and watching for inflammation. However, several nonanimal methods exist and have been validated. In 2014, the OECD drafted test guidelines that may be available for use as early as the fall of 2014. This is especially urgent because thousands of chemicals will need to be registered for a European Union regulation that takes effect in 2018, and all of these chemicals will need to be tested for skin sensitization. The Physicians Committee is working to ensure that the new tests are accepted and published as soon as possible.

Predicting Toxicity Without Animals

Adverse Outcome Pathways (AOPs) are an approach to toxicity testing that will allow regulators to predict a chemical's toxicity without testing on animals. Simply put, an AOP is a roadmap of cellular changes resulting from a particular exposure that lead up to a negative health effect. A comprehensive profile of a toxic effect on normal tissues can be developed by considering the body's response to individual toxicity tests. Since these test methods can be automated, scientists can assess the effects of a toxic chemical on a biological system in a fraction of the time it would take to conduct animal tests.



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The Physicians Committee is developing training materials and courses to promote this effort to toxicologists and basic researchers. We co-sponsored introductory training courses in March 2014 in conjunction with the Society of Toxicology meeting and in August 2014 as a satellite to the 9th World Congress on Alternatives and Animals in the Life Sciences in Prague.

At the request of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, the Physicians Committee also presented at the 9th World Congress on our experience facilitating the creation of an AOP for respiratory sensitization in 2013 and 2014. This effort is currently being written up for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

This fall, the Physicians Committee co-hosted a workshop for more than 500 scientists with the National Toxicology Program Interagency Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Toxicological Methods. The workshop, Adverse Outcome Pathways: From Research to Regulation, featured scientific presentations, hands-on training, and breakout groups moderated by senior scientists and regulators on the topic of AOPs, and was regarded by attendees as likely to make a significant contribution to the global AOPs effort. We are currently preparing recommendations in an article for publication.

Working for Legal Protections

The Physicians Committee has worked to educate members of Congress and their staffs about the pitfalls of using animals for safety testing, and we have successfully integrated language into draft legislation calling for the Environmental Protection Agency to replace and reduce animals for toxicity tests. This legislation is, however, unlikely to pass this year, which means that we will be working hard in 2015 to maintain this progress.

Rats, mice, and birds who are used in toxicity tests are not protected by the Animal Welfare Act, or even counted. This makes it difficult to judge whether progress in reducing their numbers overall is being made. The Physicians Committee is working with government officials and two Senate offices to encourage the U.S. Department of Agriculture to collect that data from companies and make it available to the public.



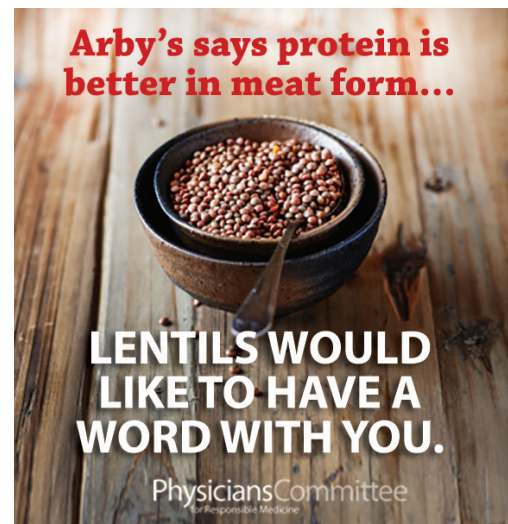
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IV. Preventive Medicine

When pop culture icons Beyoncé, Jay Z, and Jennifer Lopez announced that they were adopting plant-based diets this year, vegan diets were thrust into the spotlight. Meanwhile, some of the country's leading voices in health care have also recently endorsed an animal-free diet. Last spring, Kaiser Permanente, one of the nation's largest nonprofit health plans, sent out a nutritional update urging health care providers to recommend a plant-based diet to their patients. And the president-elect of the American College of Cardiology, Kim A. Williams, M.D., blogged about the benefits of a plant-based diet for combatting high cholesterol, diabetes, hypertension, and coronary artery disease.

Since the fall of 2013, almost 3.5 million people have visited our website to read the latest breaking medical news and to take advantage of hundreds of free resources, including articles, fact sheets, how-to guides, recipes, medical education courses, and our popular Five Worst reports. Physicians Committee commentaries and reports were covered by major media outlets including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *TIME*, *USA Today*, *ABC News*, *CBS News*, *NPR*, and *U.S. News & World Report*.

Thanks to supporters like you, the Physicians Committee has played a central role in making vegan diets mainstream, changing the national dialogue about what constitutes good nutrition, and placing plant-based diets at the forefront of preventive medicine.



Healing Diabetes

The Physicians Committee hosted the International Conference on Diabetes, co-sponsored by The George Washington University School of Medicine & Health Sciences. A panel of 35 international presenters, representing Harvard Medical School, the Harvard School of Public Health, Kaiser Permanente, University of Bern, University of Bristol, the German Diabetes Center, and the American Association of





Clinical Endocrinologists, shared the latest research findings on insulin resistance, genetic risk factors, and the role of nutrition in diabetes management.

In 2014, the Physicians Committee released a new documentary, “The Power to Heal Diabetes: Food for Life in Indian Country,” featuring Native Americans who have managed, and even reversed, diabetes after adopting a plant-based diet. So far, we have distributed nearly 10,000 copies of the documentary.

Developing Evidence for Plant-Based Diets

We completed a 20-week study on diet and diabetic neuropathy, in which we found that a low-fat, vegan diet reduces pain. We will publish the results in 2015. In late summer, we initiated a new research study comparing a vegan diet with a more conventional diabetes diet in an office practice setting. The goal is to have a fully tested, preprogrammed curriculum that doctors can use in any practice setting.

Neurobiology of Aging published articles from the 2013 International Conference on Nutrition and the Brain, including our new dietary guidelines for preventing Alzheimer’s disease. The Physicians Committee presented the findings from our diet and migraine study at the American Academy of Neurology meeting in Philadelphia in May. That study demonstrated that a low-fat, vegan diet can reduce headache frequency and intensity.

Airport Food Review

The yearly Airport Food Review has established the Physicians Committee as the authority on airport food, with airports and journalists seeking out our expertise on healthful travel food. Denver International Airport topped the Physicians Committee’s 13th annual Airport Food Review, with 85 percent of its restaurants offering healthful meals. The Physicians Committee recently partnered with airports in Baltimore and Dallas, who are striving to top the list. The 2013 report was covered by national media, including ABC, CBS, CNN, NBC, *USA Today*, Yahoo!, *Prevention*, and *Men’s Fitness*. It was also featured in the newspaper outlets of 25 different cities’ outlets, including the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Chicago Tribune*.



Processed Meat – Toxic to Your Health

Colorectal cancer, the fourth most common type of cancer, has been directly linked to the consumption of processed meat. Just one serving of processed meat per day can increase colorectal cancer risk by 21 percent. This year, the Physicians Committee launched a new website (www.DropTheDog.com) that illustrates the link between processed meat and colorectal cancer and provides free resources to help people eliminate these life-threatening products from their diets.



This year, the Physicians Committee placed a controversial billboard targeting the Lehigh Valley IronPigs, a minor league baseball team in Allentown, Pa., that had branded its uniforms with bacon strips, sold bacon scratch-and-sniff T-shirts, and offered free bacon crumbles at concessions stands. The billboard sparked a conversation in Allentown and was covered by all local media and beyond, receiving national attention in *Sports Illustrated*. The Physicians Committee also sent letters to the team owners and mayor, which included nutrition resources, plant-based recipes, and baseball cards of athletes who promote healthful diets.

Keep Kids Safe: Ban Bacon from Ballparks

www.BaconMayCauseCancer.org



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Fast-Food Chains Win 2014 SICK Award

The Physicians Committee presents its SICK (Social Irresponsibility toward Consumers and Kids) Award to restaurant chains that promote foods high in saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium – silent killers that contribute to hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. In 2014, we gave the award to KFC’s Double Down, which consists of bacon and cheese sandwiched between two fried chicken filets; McDonald’s Cheeseburger Happy Meal, which targets children and is loaded with fat and cholesterol; and Taco Bell’s A.M. Crunchwrap and Waffle Taco – unhealthy items marketed to young adults.

Healthy School Lunches

Congress will soon consider the 2015 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act, which provides funding for the National School Lunch Program and other child nutrition programs. The Physicians Committee is working to influence the outcome of those deliberations to support children’s health. We have held a series of briefings on Capitol Hill to raise awareness about the need for better access to plant-based options in school cafeterias, featuring speakers who have successfully integrated plant-based options into their schools’ menus.



In October 2013, the Physicians Committee presented its annual Golden Carrot Award to three schools that serve exceptionally healthful plant-based meals: The Active Learning Elementary School (Queens, N.Y.), Deerfield Academy (Deerfield, Mass.), and Solvang Elementary School (Solvang, Calif.) NBC’s Al Roker, *The Big Bang Theory*’s Mayim Bialik, Olympians, and NFL players joined the campaign by offering congratulations to the schools and sending inspirational letters explaining how their own healthful diets have contributed to their success. The campaign was covered by the *Boston Herald*, *New York Daily News*, CBS News Interactive, and ABC News. This year’s winners were announced in October during National School Lunch Week.

We also mailed two important resources – “Plant-Based School Lunch Quantity Recipes” and “Vegetarian Options for School Lunch Programs” – to 12,000 school lunch foodservice professionals and developed new resources to showcase best practices in schools.

Reaching New Audiences

The Physicians Committee has redoubled its efforts to provide nutrition resources to populations at greatest risk for diet-related chronic disease. Participation in our international Kickstart programs, which help people transition to a plant-based diet through free online support, has increased significantly this past year. Spanish Kickstart/Vegetariano en 21 días.org has now reached more than 30,000 people, and our Spanish Facebook page has more than 200,000 “likes.” Our website now features many popular resources in Spanish, including video lectures on the relationship between diet and health, featuring nutrition expert Aurora Leon, M.D.

This year, we increased our on-the-ground-presence in both China and India, cultures where traditional, plant-based diets have been replaced with those emphasizing animal products. Physicians Committee staff lectured in India and garnered widespread media coverage. We have also teamed up with Indian entrepreneurs and the Association for India’s Development to ensure the program continues to thrive.

Our staff toured 20 cities in mainland China to deliver lectures that reached 6,000 people. ChinaFit, a leader in the Chinese fitness industry, partnered with us and will collaborate on an additional lecture tour this fall.

The Kickstart China team is also partnering with the Hong Kong Vegan Association, Club O, and Veggie Mountain to launch a special Hong Kong version of the program. Together, we held a kickoff event featuring Chinese celebrity coaches, local vegan physicians, and journalists. In June, ECSTV partnered with us to produce a three-part informational vegan television series. And *21-Day Weight Loss Kickstart*, authored by Physicians Committee president Neal Barnard, M.D., is now available in mainland China.



This fall, the Physicians Committee is piloting a new program, “Food for Life: Healthy Basics,” geared toward those struggling to meet basic nutritional needs. We are piloting the program with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, the largest hunger relief organization in Northeast Ohio.

Educating Health Professionals

The vast majority of medical school instructors agree that students need more nutrition education. Unfortunately, only 27 percent of U.S. medical schools provide the recommended 25 hours. Likewise, most physicians believe nutrition counseling is important, but they do not feel qualified to provide it.

The Physicians Committee held a congressional briefing with Rep. Tim Ryan earlier this year to a jam-packed room of nutrition experts and congressional staff. More than 20,000 physicians and other health professionals took advantage of our free online educational resources on the role of nutrition in preventing and managing disease.

We continue to work for the passage of two important pieces of legislation – the Education and Training (EAT) for Health Act and the Expanding Nutrition’s Role in Curricula and Healthcare (ENRICH) Act. The EAT for Health Act will require physicians working for federal agencies to earn a minimum of six hours in nutrition-related Continuing Medical Education credits every year. The ENRICH Act provides \$15 million in grants for medical schools to incorporate nutrition into their curricula. Both bills were introduced this spring with bipartisan support.



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All of these campaigns are made possible by your
commitment to our mission and generous support.
From all of us at the Physicians Committee,

Thank you!



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