



Science Advancement & Outreach
A DIVISION OF PETA

1536 16th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036

April 7, 2026

Dear members of the Advisory Committee on Research on Women's Health:

On behalf of Science Advancement and Outreach, the biomedical science policy division of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, I write to request that the Advisory Committee on Research on Women's Health advise the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH) director to prioritize and support women's health research and training that focuses exclusively on non-animal methods (NAMs), and to end the conduct and funding of women's health research that uses other animals.

1. Discontinue the use of animals in women's health studies

Historically, women's health has been underfunded and understudied,¹ with a significant portion of this limited funding directed toward experiments on animals that fail to reflect human biology.² Animals commonly used in these experiments, such as mice, do not menstruate, undergo menopause, or experience the hormonal transitions that define key stages of human reproductive health.³

Efforts to induce women's health conditions into other animals—such as surgically removing ovaries to simulate menopause—fail to capture critical aspects of the human experience. Surgical removal of ovaries induces an immediate and artificial physiological state that does not reflect the slow, progressive nature of human menopause.⁴ Other animals also do not exhibit common symptoms observed in humans undergoing menopause, such as cognitive changes (“brain fog”) or the continued production of androgens by the ovaries.⁵

To develop safe, effective interventions for women, research must be grounded in the biology of women—not approximations derived from fundamentally different species. We therefore urge the ORWH to stop funding and conducting studies that use animals for women's health research and redirect resources toward human-based technologies.

2. Expand training and support for women's health researchers who are using non-animal methods

Human-based, non-animal approaches are already advancing women's health and helping to reduce research disparities. These include the ongoing development of a human organ-on-chip model of menstruation;⁶ established cervix- and vagina-on-chip models;^{7,8} and the use of human organoids to study conditions such as endometriosis.^{9,10} Additionally, single-cell technologies

have the potential to support precision medicine and more individualized care for patients with gynecological disorders, including reproductive cancers and pregnancy complications.¹¹

Recognizing the promise of human-based approaches, NIH launched an initiative to increase funding and training support for these methods.¹² ORWH can leverage this effort to drive progress in women's health research by:

- Establishing training grants and fellowships for human-relevant models of women's health.
- Collaborating with universities and research institutes to create continuing education and certification programs focused on NAMs in women's health research.
- Offering transition and early-career awards for scientists committed to replacing animal experiments with human-based systems.

These and related recommendations are expanded on in our policy roadmap, [Research Modernization NOW](#), including an appendix on women's health (p. 50).

Implementing these recommendations will allow the OWRH to lead NIH in prioritizing human-based research, accelerating the development of effective treatments, and actively address the longstanding gaps in recognition, care, and outcomes in women's health.

Thank you for considering these recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gabby Vidaurre".

Gabby Vidaurre, Ph.D.
Research Associate

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- ¹ Carneiro MM. Women's health in 2024: change now for tomorrow will be too late. *Women & Health*. 2024;64(1):1-4. doi:10.1080/03630242.2024.2292320
- ² Institute of Medicine, National Research Council. Emerging Legal Trends Impacting Animal Research. In: *International Animal Research Regulations: Impact on Neuroscience Research: Workshop Summary*. National Academies Press (US); 2012. Accessed March 31, 2026. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK100123/>
- ³ Koebele SV, Bimonte-Nelson HA. Modeling menopause: the utility of rodents in translational behavioral endocrinology research. *Maturitas*. 2016;87:5-17. doi:10.1016/j.maturitas.2016.01.015
- ⁴ Gilmer G, Hettinger ZR, Tuakli-Wosornu Y, et al. Female aging: when translational models don't translate. *Nat Aging*. 2023;3(12):1500-1508. doi:10.1038/s43587-023-00509-8
- ⁵ Whitton K, Baber R. Androgen-based therapies in women. *Best Pract Res Clin Endocrinol Metab*. 2024;38(1):101783. doi:10.1016/j.beem.2023.101783
- ⁶ Boles S. A condition more common than asthma or diabetes, yet often ignored. *The Harvard Gazette*. October 7, 2025. Accessed January 16, 2026. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2025/10/a-condition-more-common-than-asthma-or-diabetes-yet-often-ignored/>
- ⁷ Gutzeit O, Gulati A, Izadifar Z, et al. Cervical mucus in linked human cervix and vagina chips modulates vaginal dysbiosis. *Npj Womens Health*. 2025;3(1):5. doi:10.1038/s44294-025-00054-2
- ⁸ Izadifar Z, Stejskalova A, Gulati A, Gutzeit O, Ingber DE. Human cervix chip: a preclinical model for studying the role of the cervical mucosa and microbiome in female reproductive health. *Bioessays*. 2025;47(7):e70014. doi:10.1002/bies.70014
- ⁹ Gnecco JS, Brown A, Buttrey K, et al. Organoid co-culture model of the human endometrium in a fully synthetic extracellular matrix enables the study of epithelial-stromal crosstalk. *Med*. 2023;4(8):554-579.e9. doi:10.1016/j.medj.2023.07.004
- ¹⁰ Gunther K, Liu D, Cortesi M, et al. Patient-derived epithelial cell organoids mimic the phenotypic complexity of endometriosis subtypes. *Hum Reprod*. 2026;41(2):262-274. doi:10.1093/humrep/deaf230
- ¹¹ Diop M, Davidson BR, Fragiadakis GK, Sirota M, Gaudillière B, Combes AJ. Single-cell omics technologies - Fundamentals on how to create single-cell looking glasses for reproductive health. *Am J Obstet Gynecol*. 2025;232(4S):S1-S20. doi:10.1016/j.ajog.2024.08.041
- ¹² National Institutes of Health. NIH to prioritize human-based research technologies. April 29, 2025. Accessed March 31, 2026. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-prioritize-human-based-research-technologies>