



Ms. Frankie L. Trull
NABR/FBR
818 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20006
USA

July 23, 2013

Dear Ms. Trull,

Thank you for your letter inquiring about my views on the role of laboratory animals in biomedical research, especially with respect to my comments at the June 4th Scientific Management and Review Board (SMRB) meeting at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and later published in the "NIH Record."

I understand that some have interpreted these comments to mean that I think that animals are no longer necessary in medical research. This is certainly not what I meant. In fact, animal models and other surrogates of human disease are necessary -- but not sufficient -- for the successful development of new treatments. In short, animal models remain essential to the basic research that seeks to understand the complexities of disease mechanisms.

It was never my intention to imply that a renewed emphasis on human studies meant that we no longer needed animals in research. My statement was meant to make a different point -- that early validation in humans of the findings from the animal models must become a greater priority. In past decades, many believed that we could do away with translational human studies that form the bridge between basic research and new treatments, but it is now clear that this is not the case. We need to better understand human disease in humans if we are to succeed.

As a physician, a scientist, a former Director of the NIH and the Global Head of R&D of a major pharmaceutical company, I can say unequivocally that animal research remains an indispensable element in improving both human and animal health.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify my statements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elias Zerhouni", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Elias Zerhouni, MD
President Global R&D
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