

20th January 2025

Dr. Montu M.Patel
President PCI
O/o of PCI President
Pharmacy Council of India
NBCC Centre, 3rd Floor,
Plot No.2, Community Centre
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PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS
INDIA

PETA India
PO Box 28260
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Via post and email: presidentpci2718@gmail.com

Dear Dr. Montu M.Patel,

On behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India and our more than 2 million members and supporters, I am writing to urge the Pharmacy Council of India to take leadership in modernizing and humanizing education and research practices by adopting policies that replace cruel animal experiments with advanced, non-animal methodologies. With growing awareness of animal welfare and advancements in technology, now is the perfect time for the Pharmacy Council of India to drive meaningful change in academic institutions and research settings across India.

Over the last decade, progressive decisions by other regulatory bodies—such as banning dissection and animal experimentation in undergraduate and postgraduate zoology and life sciences courses—have saved millions of animals annually while promoting compassionate education and innovation. **Inspired by these achievements, I am writing to urge the Pharmacy Council of India to adopt a policy banning the use of the forced swim test in academic institutions and research settings.**

The forced swim test, also known as the Porsolt swim test, involves dropping small animals, such as mice and rats, into inescapable tanks of water. Some experimenters claim that when animals spend more time floating (as opposed to trying to escape), they're more "depressed"—despite evidence to the contrary—and often use the test in an attempt to model human depression or test antidepressant drugs. In reality, the forced swim test is not scientifically credible and is deliberately cruel. It has already been abandoned or banned outright by most of the world's major pharmaceutical companies and a number of academic institutions and government jurisdictions (See **Annexure A** for details). Please also see the **enclosed 2022 report** titled, **"The Invalidity of the Forced Swim Test,"** drafted by PETA US, for evidence detailing scientific and ethical considerations supporting a move away from this flawed experiment.

In the Indian context, where there is a growing awareness and concern for the ethical treatment of animals, **Pharmacy Council of India** can lead the way in adopting humane and progressive research practices under your leadership and expertise. We acknowledge the positive strides India has made in recognizing animal welfare as a significant aspect of scientific research and encourage **Pharmacy Council of India** to

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be at the forefront of this ethical shift. Such a commitment not only aligns with evolving ethical norms in scientific research but also sets a positive precedent for other institutions to follow.

Given this compelling evidence, will you meet with us about this issue? Thank you, and I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Dr Anjana Aggarwal
Science Policy Advisor
PETA India

Enclosures:

Annexure A

The Invalidity of the Forced Swim Test

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Annexure A Global Bans and Restrictions on the Forced Swim Test (FST)

- **July 2024:** Three medical research funding charities—the BMA Foundation, Medical Research Scotland, and The Dunhill Medical Trust—banned funding of future experiments involving FST.²
- **June 2024:** La Trobe University (Australia) prohibited FST to model human depression, anxiety disorders, and their treatment.²
- **March 2024:** The U.K. barred the use of FST a model of human depression and for studies of anxiety and its treatment, and explicitly stated it intends to “go further ... to enable a complete ban on the use of the forced swim test in the near future.”³
- **March 2024:** New South Wales (Australia) has enacted legislation making it illegal to conduct new FST.⁴
- **January 2024:** The Australian Research Council prohibited funding any experiments that use FST to model human depression in order to study “depression-like behaviour” or anxiety disorders and their treatment.¹
- **December 2023:** The Australian National Health and Medical Research Council prohibited funding any experiments that use FST to model human depression in order to study “depression-like behaviour” or anxiety disorders and their treatment.⁵
- **December 2023:** The University of Western Australia confirmed it “no longer conducts” FST.²
- **December 2023:** AgResearch, a New Zealand government research institute that oversees the use of animals in experimentation for more than 40 other institutions in the country, revised its legally-binding code of conduct to state that its ethics committees “will not consider an application” that includes FST.⁶

² People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). (2022, September). Victories! PETA Is Ending Near-Drowning Experiments on Animals. Retrieved August 22, 2024, from <https://www.peta.org/features/peta-ends-near-drowning-tests-small-animals/>

³ Sharpe, Lord. “Response to Review of the Use of the Forced Swim Test.” Home Office, 01 Mar. 2024, pp. 1-8. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-on-the-use-of-the-forced-swim-test-letter-from-lord-sharpe/letter-from-lord-sharpe-of-epsom-responding-to-the-asc-forced-swim-test-report-accessible> Accessed 8 Aug. 2024.

⁴ Hurst, Emma. “Animal Research Amendment (Prohibition of Forced Swim Tests and Forced Smoke Inhalation Experiments) Bill 2023.” New South Wales Parliament, 2023. <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/bill/files/18431/First%20Print.pdf> Accessed 8 Aug. 2024.

⁵ Statement on the forced swim test in rodent models. NHMRC. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/research-policy/ethics/statement-forced-swim-test-rodent-models> Accessed 8 Aug. 2024.

⁶ NZAVS | Ending Animal Experimentation. “Huge Victory - AgResearch Bans the Use of the Forced Swim Test in NZ!” [Huge Victory - AgResearch Bans the Use of the Forced Swim Test in NZ! - NZAVS | Ending Animal Experimentation](https://www.nzavs.org.nz/news/huge-victory-agresearch-bans-the-use-of-the-forced-swim-test-in-nz) Accessed August 08, 2024

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- **August 2023:** Universidad del Valle (Colombia) banned FST.²
- **April 2023:** 12 U.K. research universities—Exeter, Newcastle, Brighton, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, St. Andrews, Southampton, Warwick, and York—stated they neither use FST nor intend to in the future.²
- **September 2022:** Macquarie University (Australia) prohibited FST.²
- **May 2021:** Amgen confirmed it won't pursue FST.¹
- **April 2021:** The University of South Australia stated FST will not be approved for any future research projects.²
- **September 2020:** The University of Adelaide (Australia) stated it will stop using FST.²
- **June 2020:** GlaxoSmithKline banned FST.²
- **January 2020:** King's College London confirmed it will no longer use FST.²
- **January 2020:** Bristol Myers Squibb banned FST.¹
- **November 2019:** Bayer banned FST.¹
- **October 2019:** Pfizer banned FST.¹
- **September 2019:** Sage Therapeutics banned FST.¹
- **August 2019:** Novo Nordisk A/S stated it will ban FST.¹
- **August 2019:** AstraZeneca banned FST.¹
- **July 2019:** Boehringer Ingelheim banned FST.¹
- **June 2019:** AstraZeneca Therapeutics stated it does not conduct or fund such experiments and has no intention of doing so in the future.¹
- **June 2019:** Roche Pharma banned FST.¹
- **May 2019:** NutriFusion confirmed it will no longer be involved with FST.²
- **April 2019:** DSM Nutritional Products discontinued FST.²
- **March 2019:** Johnson & Johnson banned FST.¹
- **December 2018:** AbbVie banned FST.¹

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