



# Supporting Truth about Animal Research

*A Coalition of Scientific Societies*

July 3, 2018

Dennis Assanis, PhD  
President  
University of Delaware  
04 HULLIHEN HALL  
NEWARK, DE 19716

Dear President Assanis:

As you may be aware, a member of your faculty, Tania Roth, PhD, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology has been a continuing target of a harassment campaign by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). This letter, from *Supporting Truth about Animal Research: A Coalition of Scientific Societies (STAR)*, is a statement of support for this well-respected and accomplished scholar and her important research on the lifelong impacts of adverse experiences in early life.

*STAR* is an alliance of eight scientific organizations that are invested in supporting and promulgating ethically sound and scientifically valid research with nonhuman animals. Its mission is to provide a unified voice on issues that bear on research with nonhuman animals and meet the dual goals of ensuring genuine laboratory animal well-being while sustaining scientific progress.

We are deeply concerned that a scientist is being harassed simply for pursuing research that has been appropriately vetted through an integrated system of oversight, including local, state, and federal regulations to ensure research animal well-being, as well as peer review attesting to the scientific significance and rigor of the projects. We also appreciate public concerns about the well-being of research animals and note that the well-being of these animals is monitored and assessed by appropriate governing bodies that have the difficult job of weighing any negative outcomes for research subjects against the potential for important contributions to scientific knowledge.

Dr. Roth's research is aimed at understanding how negative experiences in early life change a person's genetic makeup and as a result, influence brain development, brain function, and mental health later in life, effects that sometimes span generations. Her research involves rodents because it allows her to directly examine the effects of gene-environment interactions in the brain. The knowledge gained from such

American College of  
Neuropsychopharmacology  
(ACNP)

American Psychological  
Association (APA)

American Society of  
Primatologists (ASP)

Comparative Cognition  
Society (CCS)

College on Problems of Drug  
Dependence (CPDD)

Developmental  
Neurotoxicology Society  
(DNTS)

International Study Group  
Investigating Drugs as  
Reinforcers (ISGIDAR)

Research Society on  
Alcoholism (RSA)

research has been instrumental in developing interventions for people suffering the consequences of negative early life experiences. It also informs public health policy decisions aimed at developing prevention strategies to promote healthy child development and mental health.

The attack on Dr. Roth's work is ill-informed and extremely damaging. As members of the scientific community, we will not idly stand by while a respected scientist is subjected to harassment, including threats of violence. Regulatory decisions about the ethics and scientific merit of research with nonhuman animals must be made by bodies with trusted expertise, such as scientific peer review groups and institutional animal care and use committees, not by entities that are fundamentally opposed to all research with nonhuman animals. If we allow the latter to dominate public discourse and determine the course of science through unchecked means, such harassment and threats to scientists will completely undermine the research enterprise that serves the public's interest. Indeed, last year, the American Psychological Association passed a resolution that deplores the use of harassment of scientists and other personnel engaged in the pursuit of knowledge through nonhuman animal research. We support the efforts of Dr. Tania Roth, along with those of other scientists who have been faced with similar mistreatment and join in the public defense of her research.

We urge you to publicly support Dr. Tania Roth and take a stand for nonhuman animal research and the scientists who conduct such research. If we can be of assistance in any way, please contact Sangeeta Panicker, Director of Research Ethics at the American Psychological Association, at [spanicker@apa.org](mailto:spanicker@apa.org). Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

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American Psychological Association  
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Developmental Neurotoxicology Society  
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