



April 17, 2018

Dr. Dennis Assanis
Office of the President, University of Delaware
104 HULLIHEN HALL, NEWARK, DE 19716

Dr. Diana Bianchi
Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
P.O. Box 3006, Rockville, MD 20847

Dear Dr. Assanis and Dr. Bianchi:

On behalf of the Society for Neuroscience (SfN) I am writing to stress the important role of animal research in behavioral, mental health and related basic and biomedical research. We understand that animal rights activists are objecting to the use of rats in research being conducted by Dr. Tania Roth, Associate Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences, and Director of Graduate Education, at the University of Delaware. Dr. Roth's research is also supported by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Dr. Roth is a member of SfN, the world's largest organization of scientists and physicians devoted to understanding the brain and nervous system. With nearly 36,000 members in more than 90 countries and 130 chapters worldwide, SfN affirms the critical role of animal models for advancing scientific understanding of the brain, and to improve the health and well-being of humans and animals.

Dr. Roth's work, along with others, has contributed to unveiling the role of epigenetics as a biological mechanism by which early life stress affects the development of brain networks critical for behavioral and mental health. Like all university researchers using animal models, Dr. Roth's work with rats required approval by the University of Delaware Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), which includes a veterinarian, a member of the public, and other scientists along with oversight of the NIH's Office of Animal Laboratory Welfare. Consequently, the work is being done under high federal and institutional regulation and oversight.


SfN asks that the University of Delaware both strongly affirm the importance of animal-based research and support the faculty conducting this critical work on its campus in all ways possible. The University has a responsibility to protect the faculty and other researchers—including the students employed in Dr. Roth's laboratory—from harassment. Researchers should not be subject to intimidation, aggravation or other forms of protest that are disruptive and dangerous to their personal and professional lives. Should you need them, [SfN has resources](#) available for institutions and researchers. Other organizations, including the [National Association for Biomedical Research](#) and [Americans for Medical Progress](#) also may be able to provide material.

SfN believes that research using animals must be carefully regulated and conducted humanely. To ensure this goal, governments around the world have regulatory bodies to oversee and inspect laboratories conducting animal research. The scientific community takes these obligations, principles, and professional responsibilities seriously. As we pursue scientific advances, we must limit the use of animals to those strictly necessary to assure scientific validity and rigor. We also refine experimental procedures to promote animal welfare as technology advances. All animal-based research is regulated

to ensure it is performed according to humane guidelines to maximize scientific gain with the least amount of animal suffering. The highest level of compassionate animal care is an essential component of scientific quality.

In the pursuit of treatment for diseases and better health, and through scientific progress, biomedical research should operate within the laws and guidelines set by multiple oversight bodies and with the self-imposed goal for compassionate and humane treatment of animals. But without the critical discoveries that are only made possible by animal research, we will both limit our understanding of the brain and mind, but will also hamper medical advances to treat debilitating and fatal neurological and psychiatric diseases and disorders that might otherwise be curable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mar Sanchez".

Mar Sanchez, PhD
Chair, Society for Neuroscience Committee on Animals in Research