

PhysiciansCommittee

for Responsible Medicine

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CAPT Lisa Mulligan, MD
Commanding Officer
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Sent via email (usn.hampton-roads.navmedeastporsva.list.nme-pao@mail.mil and angela.a.steadman.civ@mail.mil)

Dear Capt. Mulligan:

As military veterans and active service members, we are writing to ask that you use your authority to replace the use of live animals in the Naval Medical Center Portsmouth emergency medicine residency program. We have chosen to write today, on Veterans Day, because this issue is deeply personal to us and impacts the lives and safety of all the Sailors and Marines who may one day require care from the physicians currently training at NMCP. Together, we have served more than 200 years in the U.S. military, and all of us have experienced firsthand either the educational benefits of human-relevant methods, the shortcomings of animal-based medical training, or both.

We understand that, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, NMCP's emergency medicine program suspended animal-based training in March 2020 but subsequently resumed the practice in July. We are disappointed that NMCP did not take that opportunity to modernize its curriculum, especially as other institutions have done so. Just as this ongoing crisis has required academic programs around the world, including medical residencies, to evaluate how to educate without jeopardizing human health, it is also providing an opportunity to reconsider whether long-held practices are indeed optimal.

An ever-growing body of scientific evidence supports recent changes in medical training. A pair of military studies published this year supports the replacement of animals in NMCP's emergency medicine residency. In one of the studies, published in July, the authors evaluated whether simulators could adequately prepare a group of U.S. Army physicians to perform life-saving procedures. [The study](#) demonstrated that a curriculum using simulators that mimic human anatomy significantly improved trainees' knowledge of and confidence in several emergency procedures, stating: "All participants felt the simulation to be beneficial and had more comfort with the tasks."

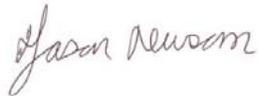
[Another study](#), published in March, evaluated U.S. Navy and Army medical providers' performance of several emergency procedures, as carried out on the Human Worn Surgical Simulator, which features lifelike skin, breakable bones, and a pumping artificial heart, all worn by an actor. By the end of the course, participants had reduced resuscitation time. The authors concluded: "The data indicate that hyper-realistic immersive simulation training enhances multidisciplinary healthcare team members' interactions and improves surgical procedures and processes."

These are just two recent publications, but there are many others, and we would be happy to provide a list at your request. A curriculum change is also supported by the overwhelming number of NMCP's peer programs that forgo live animal use to teach emergency medicine residents (276 of the 285 programs in the U.S. and Canada), including Naval Medical Center San Diego.

We believe NMCP has an opportunity right now to make its medical training more humane and more consistent with national standards. We ask that you eliminate live animals from the emergency medicine residency program as soon as possible. Such a change would be in the best interest of your trainees and their future patients.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Very truly,



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