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Dr. Jeffrey R. Balser, Dean, School of Medicine and Vanderbilt University Medical Center Office of Research:

Please permanently switch to validated non-animal systems for all Vanderbilt University School of Medicine Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) classes. I urge you to join over 90% of U.S. and Canadian facilities that exclusively use human-focused medical simulators to train students.

I understand one Vanderbilt ATLS program required trainees to slice the airways of live pigs to place tubes and needles in the animals' hearts and chest cavities. Emergency medical training is better served by relevant and humane non-animal modes.

TraumaMan's anatomical body facilitates practice of lifesaving skills and reduces trainee dropout rates. The American College of Surgeons endorses TraumaMan System, SimMan, human cadavers and other synthetic models.

Overall, animal-free research cuts costs and improves proficiency. For example, a New England Journal of Medicine article highlights the "very detailed feedback and…more subtle measurement of trainee performance" gained from virtual reality simulators.

Dr. Emad Aboud — co-inventor of a system that pumps specially dyed water into a human cadaver's vessels and arteries — says animal-free models are cheaper and more accurate. "This is the perfect alternative to the use of live animals in surgical training," claims Aboud, a neurosurgeon fellow at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

If you haven't done so already, I encourage Vanderbilt to update its trauma-management training with methods more relevant to human anatomy and surgery. Killing animals is no longer viable, given the accessibility of capable non-animal technologies.

Thank you,