

Pharmacy council bans animal tests to train students

NEW DELHI: The Pharmacy Council of India has decided to amend Education Regulations, 1991 and Pharma D Regulations, 2006 to ban the use of animals like mice, rats and guinea pigs to train pharmacy students in the country.

The move will ban painful experiments involving burning animals' feet, electrocuting them, inducing convulsions, and killing which have been common in Indian pharmacy courses so far.

"Following years of meetings and discussions with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), India as well as continuous efforts by People for Animals (PFA) and work by now Union Cabinet Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi, the Pharmacy Council of India has amended Education Regulations, 1991 and Pharma D Regulations, 2006," said the animal rights organisation in a statement.

"The regulations have been amended to read wherever animal experimentations are prescribed in the curriculum, the required knowledge and skill should be imparted by using computer-assisted modules," it added.

PETA India's Science Policy Advisor, Dr Chaitanya Kodari, said, "Today, compassion and modern science have prevailed. The Pharmacy Council of India's move will spare countless animals

from suffering and will enrich the lives of countless students who will now be able to learn using modern, sophisticated and non-animal techniques."

In line with guidelines

According to the NGO, the new move is in line with guidelines issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in January 2012 for colleges and universities regarding dissection and animal experimentation. "The

guidelines said nowadays, effective alternatives in the form of CDs, computer simulations, models and in-vitro methods are superior pedagogic tools in the teaching of pharmacy or life sciences," the NGO said.

"In June 2012, the PCI had sent a copy of these guidelines to pharmacy teaching institutions throughout India."

There has been a trend away from the use of animals in education in India.

In May 2014, the Medical Council of India amended its education regulations to call for the use of modern non-animal teaching methods for undergraduate students.

In June, the University Grants Commission issued a notification ending dissection and experimentation (for training purposes) in university and college zoology and life sciences undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

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