NIH Promises to Retire Chimps With HIV and Hepatitis

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The National Institutes of Health (NIH) plans to retire all the nearly 300 government research chimpanzees to sanctuaries—allowing the endangered animals, many of which were intentionally given HIV and hepatitis throughout the years, to live out the rest of their lives free from medical experimentation, CNN reports.

The decision reverses the NIH's longstanding policy to continue with chimpanzee testing, despite the species' scarcity and internationally protected status. Before now, the government agency argued that the animals were still desperately needed for "critical research" to help save human lives.

However, after reassessing the issue, the NIH believes the need for chimpanzee research in the United States has shrunk to "essentially zero." The first set of retired NIH chimps could arrive at an approved sanctuary in Louisiana called Chimp Haven by early 2016.

In the meantime, Chimp Haven is launching a capital campaign to help fund the retirement effort early next year. The U.S. government may also pay for part of their accommodation.

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