

Landmark Grant Paves the Way for Animal-Free Leukaemia Research

New research could transform the way scientists study leukaemia while reducing the need for animals in research

A major new research grant aiming to improve our understanding of leukaemia while reducing the use of animals in science has been announced today to mark **World Leukaemia Day (4 September)**.

Funded by **The Humane Research Trust**, with support from **Naturewatch Foundation**, the £450,000 grant will enable Dr Minerva Bosch-Fortea at Barts Cancer Institute to develop a pioneering 100% animal-free model of the leukaemia bone marrow environment.

Leukaemia affects thousands of people across the UK every year, with around **9,900 new cases diagnosed annually** - equivalent to around 27 people every day. Despite advances in treatment, treatment resistance remains a major challenge.

Dr Bosch-Fortea's research will recreate the complex environment in which leukaemia cells develop, using human-based approaches rather than animals. The project could ultimately **reduce the use of mice in this type of research by up to 80%**, while helping researchers better understand why leukaemia progresses and why some treatments stop working.

Dr Minerva Bosch-Fortea said:

"By creating a fully human and animal-free model of the bone-marrow microenvironment, we hope to better understand how leukaemia progresses and why treatments fail, while demonstrating that more predictive and ethical approaches to cancer research are possible."

The fellowship comes at a significant moment for UK science. **2.54 million scientific procedures were carried out on animals in Great Britain in 2025**, according to official figures, while the UK Government has recently announced new projects aimed at moving science away from animal testing and towards innovative approaches that could help patients access medicines faster. Dr Minerva's research is expected to save **400 mice a year from being used** in animal testing. With broader adoption, even modest uptake across UK haematology research could replace over 5,000 animal experiments annually, demonstrating the tangible impact that alternatives to animal testing can have.

This growing momentum reflects a shift towards research methods designed to be more relevant to human biology. Non-animal replacement methods have the potential to deliver more reliable, human-specific results. By investing in these innovative approaches, we can advance human health more effectively and replace the need for animals in research.

Alison Giles, Chief Executive Officer at The Humane Research Trust, said:

"This is the largest grant we have awarded to date, and it reflects our ambition to support transformative research that replaces animal use. We are delighted to be working alongside Naturewatch Foundation on this important initiative."

The partnership between the two charities highlights the growing potential of **animal-free science** to drive progress in human health. It also offers a unique opportunity for supporters of both charities and the wider public to play a role in advancing frontline scientific research.

Laura Lendrum, Campaign Manager at Naturewatch Foundation, said:

"Naturewatch Foundation is proud to support the Humane Research Fellowship and this exciting new approach to leukaemia research. There is a real opportunity to use human-relevant science to deliver better outcomes for patients while also importantly avoiding the need for animals in research."

As momentum continues to build around animal-free approaches, this investment highlights that better science and better welfare go hand in hand, benefiting both people and animals.

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About Naturewatch Foundation: Naturewatch Foundation is a registered charity working to end animal abuse and advance animal protection through campaigning, education and advocacy. For further information about Naturewatch Foundation's work supporting animal-free research: [Naturewatch Foundation – Animal-free research](#)

About The Humane Research Trust: The Humane Research Trust funds scientists developing alternatives to animal testing, supporting innovative approaches that aim to improve outcomes for both people and animals. Further information can be found at: humanersearch.org.uk

About Barts Cancer Institute: Barts Cancer Institute (BCI) is part of Queen Mary University of London and brings together scientists and clinicians working to understand cancer and develop better ways to prevent, diagnose and treat the disease. BCI is a partner in the Cancer Research UK City of London Centre.