

Promising coronavirus treatment effort blocked by fetal tissue research ban

A senior scientist at a government biomedical research laboratory has been thwarted in his efforts to conduct experiments on possible treatments for the new [coronavirus](#) because of the Trump administration's restrictions on research with human fetal tissue.

The scientist, Kim Hasenkrug, an immunologist at the National Institutes of Health's Rocky Mountain Laboratories in Montana, has been appealing for nearly a month to top NIH officials, arguing that the pandemic warrants an exemption to a ban imposed last year prohibiting government researchers from using tissue from abortions in their work.

[S]uch experiments could be particularly fruitful. Just months ago, before the new coronavirus began to infect people around the world, other U.S. scientists made two highly relevant discoveries. They found that specialized mice could be transplanted with human fetal tissue that develops into lungs — the part of the body the new coronavirus invades. These “humanized mice,” they also found, could then be infected with coronaviruses — to which ordinary mice are not susceptible — closely related to the one that causes the new disease, covid-19.

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The inability of the Montana lab, part of NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, to pursue these experiments on the coronavirus is the latest example of [disruptions to scientists' work](#) caused by the administration's restrictions on research involving fetal tissue.

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