In a significant move, the Medical Council of India (MCI) has decided to end the use of animal experiments for undergraduate medical students and has asked the colleges to opt for alternatives to animal experimentation.

After having discussed the matter, experts in the animal alternate committee for UG curriculum decided that in future animal experiments would be replaced with computer-assisted learning exercised and clinical relevant modules. "It has been decided that animals will no longer be used for experiments. There are colleges which make use of animals for demonstration to undergraduate students. We have intimated the colleges to end the use of animals in their experiments," said Dr Y.K. Gupta, chairman of the animal alternate committee for the undergraduate curriculum. In medical colleges to teach about human anatomy, colleges use human cadaver, guinea pigs and frogs too for experiments. The MCI decided to crack the whip after anti-vivisectionists and rights groups expressed and urged for total replacement in animal experimentation. Even the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals last year asked the MCI to re-evaluate and amend regulations allowing medical colleges to end the use of animals in their curricula and opt for cutting-edge, non-animal research methodologies. Citing that numerous recent studies have shown that animal experiments often waste lives — both animal and human — and precious resources by trying to infect animals with diseases that they would never normally contract, Peta had written to MCI. Significantly, majority of medical schools in the US, Canada and the UK have ended the use of animals in their curricula, as prominent medical associations now encourage medical schools to replace the use of animals with non-animal teaching methods.

"The experiments can be replaced with computer-based techniques. Colleges will have to opt for clinical relevant modules," added Dr Gupta.