

**Dear readers,**

Yes, ALTEX' impact factor has risen further: This means that work on alternatives to animal experiments is being noticed and discussed more, hopefully leading to better implementation of the 3Rs.

A large part of the citations of ALTEX articles in 2014 were attributed to the Food for Thought ... contributions and the t⁴ workshop reports. A column organized by Thomas Hartung, Food for Thought ... has been in ALTEX consistently since issue 2/2007, offering analyses of challenges in many different fields that feed into alternative methods as well as visions of the way forward. ALTEX would like to thank the authors and co-authors of the Food for Thought ... articles for the quality of this unique and well recognized column; we look forward to the next installments. The t⁴ workshop reports are key deliverables of workshops organized by the transatlantic think tank for toxicology (t⁴) via CAAT/CAAT-Europe that truly live up to the meaning of the word "workshop": presentations are kept very brief and the invitees have to knuckle down to find consensus and solutions, and to produce an insightful report out of the arising synergies. We hope that these reports will continue to be submitted to ALTEX despite that sponsorship of this project by the Doerenkamp-Zbinden Foundation has run out.

Many original research papers and reviews have also been highly cited. We hope this will lead to greater use of alternative methods in all fields of research, especially in basic research where finding out about existing alternative models can quickly lead to their implementation. As ever, the decision of which papers to accept for publication in ALTEX is driven by the 3R relevance of the paper and the potential impact of the results on the welfare of laboratory animals.

In this issue, Food for Thought ... is provided by Costanza Rovida and colleagues on whether and how the Tox21c approach, i.e., toxicity testing in the 21st century, the concept of changing from an animal-based approach to a mechanistic-based *in vitro* approach to toxicity testing, is also applicable to the drug and the food industry with their unique challenges and requirements. In contrast to chemicals, here the compounds are designed to enter the human body, so safety concerns are even higher.

Two papers on refinement promise to improve the lot of laboratory animals. Sarah Mundt and colleagues investigate the feasibility of employing implanted osmotic drug pumps to control pain in mice used for intracranial infection studies. They find effective pain control without immunological parameters being affected and indicate that this approach may also be applicable to other experimental settings. Fluorescent tagging of the gene sequence introduced to transgenic mice allows fast genotyping of intact mice as described by Dieter Fink et al. This method could replace genotyping of tail samples by PCR, also saving time and costs.

Barae Jomaa et al. continue their interesting series of papers published in ALTEX, this time introducing a novel *in vitro* assay to identify disruptors of thyroid peroxidase activity using a human thyroid cell line. Christina Spohr and colleagues present an *in vitro* assay developed to quantify bovine tuberculin PPDs. These are used in a skin test to control livestock for tuberculosis. The test could replace a potency test in mycobacteria-sensitized guinea pigs.

Marie-Jeanne Schiffelers et al. analyze the obstacles and challenges to the acceptance and implementation of alternative methods based on the example of the serum neutralization test (SNT), which has replaced the mouse test to determine the potency of veterinary rabies vaccines in the European Pharmacopoeia. Understanding this process raises consciousness that even when an alternative method is formally accepted, the job is not yet done and that the path to implementation also requires considerable effort and dedication.

The Corners and News provide an overview of current developments in the field of alternative methods.

ALTEX is currently compiling the Abstract Book for the EUSAAT/LINZ Congress this September where we also look forward to presenting the ALTEX Award for the best paper published in ALTEX during 2014.

Enjoy reading this exciting compilation of 3Rs articles,

Sonja von Aulock
Editor in chief, ALTEX