

Dear readers,

to understand the origin of the ALTEX issue in your hands, we have to go back a little bit into the history of development and propagation of alternatives to animal experimentation in Switzerland.

The Foundation for Research without Animal Experiments (FFVFF), publisher of ALTEX, was established in 1976. Main objectives have been and are "to clarify to mankind/people their responsibility for animals being used as experimental objects, and to propagate the development of techniques, which can replace animal experiments and allow valid predication and statements". The foundation is supported exclusively by donations of individuals and of other organisations for animal protection, of which the "Tierschutzbund Zürich" and "Zürcher Tierschutz" are the most prominent sponsors. Over 3.5 Million Swiss Francs have been spent for projects until now.

It is the purpose of the foundation to develop, propagate and apply scientific methods in research, analytic investigation, medical treatment, production and controlling of products, by which painful animal experiments can be eliminated or significantly reduced.

The purpose of the foundation can be attained by the following activities: Collection, publication and distribution of documents, financial support of research projects according to the subsequent principles: The project must contribute to the reduction of human and animal suffering or lead to new insights, which cause the conservation or prolongation of life, or inseminate scientific theories of life (basic research), and the project must in no way include the use of living animals in painful experiments.

The foundation exchanges information with other organisations with the same purpose and it can also support parts of large projects in Switzerland and abroad.

So far to the profile of the Zurich foundation FFVFF which has existed now for 25 years and which is owner and publisher of ALTEX - Alternatives to Animal Experimentation.

ALTEX is the most prestigious and long lasting project of the FFVFF. So it was appropriate, to celebrate the 25 year anniversary of the foundation with the publication of ALTEX supplements. After an international announcement, five authors have been selected by the foundation board to describe the state of the art in alternative methods and to predict the perspectives of 3R-research in the near, middle and far future (i.e. 5, 10 and 20 years). In addition, the FFVFF was hoping to get information about which tests are most painful for animals and their possible replacement and to get a register of existing alternatives. Furthermore, it should be listed who develops alternatives and who should do so additionally. A crucial point was to prove the realisation and acceptance of alternatives and to show who furthers alternatives and who hinders them.

The first article of the first supplement about "Three Rs Potential in the Development and Quality Control of Pharmaceuticals" was written by Thomas Hartung from the Biochemical

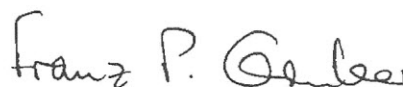
Pharmacology and Steinbeis-Technology-Transfer-Center for *in vitro* Pharmacology and Toxicology (STZ InPuT), University of Konstanz, Germany. At first, he asked if and why we do need animal research in the development and quality control of pharmaceuticals at all. He came to the conclusion that drugs can not be used without safety controls. The better standardised the drug and the better the risk factors are characterised, the less animals will be required to control these agents. Hartung brings it to the point with his visionary statement: We need drug development, but we do not necessarily need animal experiments for drug development. However, the shift from *in vivo* to *in vitro* techniques takes time and requires the development and acceptance of alternatives.

Marlies Halder wrote on behalf of AGAAT (Advisory Group on Alternatives to Animal Testing in Immunobiologicals) the second chapter in this first supplement about the "Three Rs Potential in the Development and Quality Control of Immunobiologicals". She estimates that 10 millions of laboratory animals are used world-wide for the production and quality control of immunobiologicals, of which 80% are needed for the safety and potency testing of the finished product (batch control). Although several tests with questionable relevance have been deleted from the European Pharmacopoeia monographs (e.g. abnormal toxicity test, extraneous agents testing of viral vaccines for carnivores) in the last years, Halder finds the period between successful validation and the implementation appearing to be far too long.

The following supplement (ALTEX Supplement 2001/2) will deal with the topic "Alternatives to Animal Testing: Research Trends, Validation, Regulatory Acceptance" written by Jane Huggins (Toxicology Consulting Services, Plainsboro, New Jersey). This will be a very complete description of the situation of the regulatory acceptance of alternative methods. Franz P. Gruber (FFVFF, Zurich) will supplement this excellent overview with remarks about "Alternatives to Animal Experimentation in Basic Research and Higher Education", and finally, Brigitte Rusche (Academy for Animal Welfare, Neubiberg, Germany) completes the 3R position papers with the point of view under which animal welfare organisations have to see replacement, reduction and refinement of animal experiments.

We hope both ALTEX supplements will find acceptance in the scientific community, regulatory agencies as well as animal welfare organisations. We wonder if this will start an intensive discussion about the future perspectives of 3R research.

Best wishes



Franz P. Gruber

(Scientific head of FFVFF and managing editor of ALTEX)