



Conference Proceedings

First Indian Congress on Alternatives to the Use of Animals in Research, Testing & Education

Chennai (India), January 29-31 2007

January 29, 2007 was a new landmark in the history of Three Rs alternatives. On that day, the First Indian Congress on Alternatives to the Use of Animals in Research, Testing & Education was opened. The meeting lasted for three days and was held at the Sri Ramachandra University in Chennai (formerly Madras). Organisers were the International Center for Alternatives in Research & Education, the Sri Ramachandra University and the International Institute for Biotechnology & Toxicology. The Doerenkamp-Zbinden Foundation was one of the major sponsors of the congress. Both the cover page of the abstract book and one of the banners in the meeting hall depicting a famous quote of Mahatma Gandhi made clear what the reference point for the meeting was: "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Respect for living beings is part of the basic attitude that characterises Hinduism. Ethical considerations were an important issue during the whole conference, but also the other considerations that favor the use of alternatives were discussed. Although the economy is doing well and industrial initiatives flourish, India is still a 3rd World country. Particularly these countries have tremendous problems in dealing with the infra-structure (e.g. animal facilities, environment) needed for performing high quality animal research. Therefore, going for alternatives is not only a matter of ethics but also a matter of pragmatics.

The meeting was attended by about 100 people, almost all from India, but also a few from Pakistan. Most of the attendees were young scientists with an eager interest to learn about new innovative Three Rs alternatives. There was no hesitation in asking questions, which sparked off animated discussions.

An official ceremony marked the opening of the conference. After a welcome address by Dr. Shiranee Pereira, main organiser of the conference and head of I-CARE, an inaugural address was given by **Dr. Thanikachalam**, well-known cardiologist, former Vice-Chancellor of the University and Chief co-ordinator of the congress. In his talk Dr. Thanikachalam used the following statement: "It's the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief, and once that belief becomes a deep conviction, things begin to happen." He continued by saying that "...the surveys indicate that the majority of award winning research has been conducted without animals by *in vitro* methods in biomedical research", and the tone was set for the rest of the conference. A special and a key note address were given by **Dr. Desai**, chairman of the Medical Council of India and **Dr. Ramasami**, Secretary of the Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India, respectively. Contributions by international guests were given by **Dr. Alan Goldberg**, director of the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing (CAAT) of Johns Hopkins University, **Dr. Thomas Hartung**, head of ECVAM, **Dr. Horst Spielmann**,

head of ZEBET, **Dr. Murthy**, director of the International Institute of Biotechnology and Toxicology, India, **Dr. Mohammad Akbarsha** of Bharathidasan University and **Dr. Maria Webb** of the New University of Lisbon. Dr. Alan Goldberg presented a perspective on the Three Rs. He discussed societal expectations of animal use in science, and addressed the issue of importance of the Three Rs today. All the other speakers mentioned the above discussed relevant political and scientific developments in several areas of research and testing. I myself gave a brief overview of the Three Rs in the production and quality control of vaccines and discussed some future opportunities.

A substantial part of the conference was used for technology transfer. Every afternoon introductions and practical workshops were held on relevant Three Rs issues. **Dr. Manfred Liebsch** of ZEBET presented, with lots of enthusiasm and with increasing interest of the participants, the validated and non-validated *in vitro* methods for eye/skin irritation and phototoxicity testing. It made him forget about all the organisational problems he had to overcome to demonstrate the HET-CAM test and the *in vitro* (human) skin corrosion test: The shipped material had arrived just in time. **Dr. Joe Bressler** of Johns Hopkins University (US) gave an overview of the various models that are being used to study blood-brain barriers. He showed a video of all the steps in establishing an *in vitro* culture of microvessels from brains of slaughtered animals.



Interesting introductions and demonstrations were also given by **Dr. Pamela Lein** of the University of Portland (US) on primary nerve cell cultures and *in vitro* approaches to developmental neurotoxicity testing, by **Dr. Albert Li** of Advanced Pharmaceutical Sciences about an integrated discrete multiple organ co-culture for toxicity evaluation and by **Dr. Ramachandran** of Stella Maris College, Chennai, on alternatives in teaching.

The final session of the conference was a panel discussion "Taking forward the science to India" chaired by **Dr. Thanikacha-**

lam, in which most of the conference speakers were involved. This resulted in a list of 27 resolutions and recommendations to guide and improve the implementation of Three Rs methods in India.

Adjunct to the meeting, I was invited by King Institute, a vaccine producing facility in Chennai housed in one of the colonial buildings, to give a lecture on the Three Rs approaches in vaccine quality control.

In summary, I attended an unforgettable conference: mostly well organised, interesting talks, nice workshops, lively

discussions, but above all I enjoyed the opportunity to meet wonderful people, friendly in every respect, eager to learn and committed to the Three Rs. What else can one wish for?

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Reviews – Besprechungen

Die Notwendigkeit der Aufnahme des Tierschutzes in das Grundgesetz

Dargestellt am Verhältnis des Tierschutzes zur Wissenschaftsfreiheit

Martin Fielenbach

2004, Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang (Europäische Hochschulschriften Reihe II, Rechtswissenschaft, Bd. 4146). ISBN 3-631-53741-7

Nach der grundlegenden Arbeit von J. Caspar und M. W. Schröter (Das Staatsziel Tierschutz in Art. 20a GG, 2003) liegt nun eine weitere Untersuchung über die Staatszielbestimmung Tierschutz im deutschen Grundgesetz vor. Während Caspar und Schröter sich in erster Linie mit den Auswirkungen des neuen Staatszieles auf die Staatsgewalten auseinandersetzen, besteht die Zielsetzung *Fielenbachs* darin, Umfang und Grenzen des Grundrechts der Wissenschaftsfreiheit (Art. 5 III 1 GG) auszuloten und zu untersuchen, ob bzw. inwiefern die tierversuchrechtlichen Bestimmungen des deutschen Tierschutzgesetzes als Eingriff in den Schutzbereich dieses Grundrechts zu beurteilen sind. Im Anschluss daran wird erörtert, ob die ver-

fassungsrechtliche Absicherung des Tierschutzes überhaupt erforderlich war und ob der deutsche Verfassungsgesetzgeber – insbesondere durch supranationale Vorgaben – zur Verankerung des Tierschutzes im GG verpflichtet war.

Zunächst befremdet, dass der Autor den Begriff Vivisektion (lat. *sectio corporis vivi* – (zer)schneiden des lebenden Körpers) als Synonym für den Begriff Tierversuch verwendet, obwohl er nur chirurgische Versuche an im Allgemeinen unbetäubten Tieren umfasst; da Vivisektion im Rahmen der Tierschutzbewegung des 19. Jahrhunderts als Schlagwort mit durchaus polemischem Beigeschmack verwendet wurde, sollte er aus semantischen Gründen im Diskurs über

das geltende Recht vermieden werden.

Beachtung verdienen hingegen die – wengleich knappen – Ausführungen über die ethische Beurteilung von Tierversuchen. *Fielenbach* schreibt jedenfalls höher entwickelten Tieren nicht nur ein Interesse an der Freiheit von Schmerzen, Leiden und Schäden, sondern auch ein Interesse an der Erhaltung des Lebens zu, sodass auch der „schmerzlosen“ Tötung von Versuchstieren nicht bloss rechtliche, sondern auch ethische Relevanz zukommt. Aus begründungstheoretischer Sicht unbefriedigend ist jedoch, dass der Autor unter Bezugnahme auf das Axiom der „Gottesebenbildlichkeit“ von einem „(generell) höheren Wert menschlichen Lebens“ ausgeht.