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Seitdem die EU-Kommission 2001 das Weissbuch „Strategie für eine zukünftige Chemikalienpolitik“ publiziert und 2003 den Entwurf zur REACH-Verordnung verabschiedet hat, scheiden sich über deren Inhalt und Umsetzbarkeit die Geister. Konsens besteht einzig darin, dass die Gesundheit von Mensch und Umwelt vor Gefahren, ausgehend von chemischen Stoffen, geschützt werden muss. Mit welchen Mitteln und in welchem Umfang diese Gefahren erfasst werden sollen und inwieweit der Verbraucher Einsicht in die Datenblätter von Industrie und Behörden erhalten soll, bleibt noch zu diskutieren. Einige Hürden sind bis

zum in Kraft treten der REACH-Verordnung noch zu überwinden. Zu unterschiedlich sind die Positionen von Industrie, Tierschutz und Verbraucherverbänden, als dass schnelle Lösungen zu erwarten sind. Diese werden aber dringend gebraucht, denn im Oktober 2005 findet die erste Lesung des Gesetzestextes im Europaparlament statt und bis dahin sollten den Politikern konstruktive Vorschläge für eine Verbesserung des Vorschlags der Europäischen Gemeinschaften vorliegen.

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The 2nd InterNICHE conference

Alternatives in the Mainstream: Innovations in life sciences education and training
Oslo, Norway, 12-15 May, 2005

The 2nd InterNICHE Conference “Alternatives in the Mainstream” was organised by the International Network for Humane Education (InterNICHE) with the co-ordination centre based in England, in a close partnership with NOAH – for animal rights, based in Oslo, Norway. The event was held in Kulturkirken Jacob, an attractive 19th century former church that offers excellent facilities for conferences and cultural events, in the centre of Oslo, surrounded by trees and overlooking the Akerselva River. A four-day comprehensive conference programme procured an extremely positive feedback from all the speakers and delegates participating in the event. With 32 countries represented at the conference, with delegates including teachers, students, campaigners, producers, journalists and government representatives, and with the conference sound files now launched on-line, the impact of the event will reverberate across the world. The conference was the largest and most successful event of its kind focusing on alternatives in education and related issues.

As had been promised before the event, the conference was an exciting and inspiring event at the cutting edge of educational innovation and practice. It is the only major international conference on advanced learning tools and alternatives to animal experiments in education with leading international speakers, multimedia and virtual reality rooms, posters, a discussion forum and workshops. The programme was suitable for teachers and students of medicine, veterinary medicine and biological science; for curriculum designers and learning technologists; for animal ethics committees, policy makers and legislators; for ethicists, animal campaigners and others committed to a progressive, humane education.

After the preamble speech of the organisers of the conference, **Nick Jukes** and **Siri Martinsen**, on the “Introduction, principles and practice”, the 1st day offered an overview of the issue of animal use in education.

In a positive spirit, the next three days introduced and presented various alterna-

tive methods used in education, emphasising the importance of contemporary and hi-tech methods in the replacement of invasive procedures on animals.

The attention of numerous participants was attracted by two hi-tech alternatives to highly invasive medical techniques such as laparoscopy and neurosurgery. These alternatives present a direct alternative tool to a number of procedures in which thousands of animals are used as experimental subjects and are eventually killed in medical training facilities.

The SimSurgery® Education Platform (SEP™) is a general platform for computer-based surgical training and education. It is a complete learning system including both hardware and software components that emulates the real laparoscopic situation. The SEP™ is unique in its design with regard to how the surgeon interacts with the simulator (SimPack™) and to the variety of training exercises. The surgical interface SimPack™ can be used to model different body surfaces with different port placements and thus enables procedure



specific anatomy exploration. The simulator software that uses a standard PC offers a large range of skill training. The simulator displays both abstract and procedure realistic scenes. Many basic skills can be learned in an abstract environment, whereas more advanced skills should be learned in procedure realistic environments. Skill assessment by validated measures reflects the user's competence level. The administration unit of SEP™ is easily combined with all kinds of additional educational material by embedding tools to access multimedia inside the software. The SEP™ includes modular software for easy update of new training modules. The system has individual applications for administration, training in roaming mode (free selection of exercises), and training in session mode (predefined curriculum). In the session mode, it is possible to require that the user exceed a certain performance level, before he/she can continue to the next set of training exercises. More info at: www.simsurgery.no.

Emad Aboud, from the department of neurosurgery at the College of Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) presented an alternative he has developed. It is a new training method that allows students of human and veterinary medicine to practice surgical manoeuvres on human cadavers or ethically sourced animal cadavers. In order to simulate life, the circulation of the cadaver is connected to a device composed of artificial blood reservoirs and a pump that transmits pulsating blood under pressure through the cadaver vessels. This method has been used successfully for training in neurosurgery of hands-on realistic procedures such as treatment of anastomosis and brain haemorrhage. The system can be applied to many other surgical techniques and treatments (such as treatment of bleeding, suturing, etc.).

Beside the 29 lectures the participants were encouraged to visit workshops raising many important issues concerned with alternatives and animal use issues. All workshops were carried out in a very educational and professional way, widening

the perspectives on problems and solutions, on ethics and alternatives to animal use in education.

Multimedia and VR (Virtual Reality) Exhibition)

The conference programme included a spacious room for an exhibition of multimedia and virtual reality, where many manufacturers and users of alternatives could present their products and alternative tools. Manufacturers of alternatives have been partners in the process of enhancing life science education, and their exhibits were an essential part of the conference. Many manufacturers were invited to join others in presenting, demonstrating or selling their multimedia and virtual reality software, videos, films, models, mannequins and simulators. Some manufacturers were already known to many conference delegates, following the inclusion of their alternatives in the book "From Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse" (InterNICHE, 2003). The conference provided a forum for live demonstrations and one-to-one contact and discussion that may further facilitate the implementation of such learning tools into university life science courses. Other types of exhibits included campaign exhibits.

Also, the participants had a great opportunity to see, test and assess a number of other alternatives presented in the Multimedia and VR Exhibition room. On that occasion alternatives currently presented on the market covering the fields of Anaesthesia & Critical Care, Biochemistry & Cell Biology, Clinical Skills & Surgery, Pathology, Pharmacology, Physiology and others were presented.

2005 Humane Education Award

During the conference, InterNICHE announced the 2005 Humane Education Award. Since 2002, InterNICHE has supported teachers' initiatives to replace animal use by an annual Humane Education Award of 20,000 Euro, thus achieving direct replacement of several thousand severe procedures on animals in Romania and India with the potential to multiply this world-wide by funding the

production of anatomy, physiology and pharmacology freeware. All interested individuals, groups and institutions working on the promotion of replacement of animal use in education by alternatives are encouraged to apply for the award. More information can be found on the InterNICHE homepage.

Follow up

Currently the movement to promote alternatives to harmful animal use in education and research is certainly growing and strengthening. The media, including the Internet have played a key role in the promotion of alternatives. Therefore, InterNICHE has published sound recordings of the InterNICHE Conference on the web. The files can be downloaded for free at the address:

<http://www.interniche.org/2005conference/online.html>

Every few days, a new selection of presentations will be uploaded. The full conference sound recording will be available at a later date, along with the conference proceedings. Certainly the conference was a very successful and useful way to promote alternatives in education, providing lots of information and direct proposals on how to improve education, respecting the needs of both humans and animals. Promoting alternatives and raising the awareness of primary and secondary school students, teachers, professors, curriculum designers and the public about the importance and significance of non-harmful approaches to animals in everyday life including education and research is an essential way to start the creation of a more sympathetic society toward other living beings whom we humans share the planet with. The next step is up to all of us, both those who promote and ask for alternatives and those who are responsible for their legislative enforcement.

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