AUT: Opening of Messerli Research Institute on Human-Animal Interactions

The Messerli Research Institute at the University of Veterinary Medicine (Vetmeduni), Vienna, Austria, was opened on March 29, 2012. The Institute will be dedicated to investigating human-animal interactions, taking into account the underlying sciences of ethics, comparative medicine, and animal cognition and behavior. The work will be characterized by a broad interdisciplinary approach involving the fields of biology, human medicine, veterinary medicine, philosophy, psychology, and law. It will also have an international focus. As an example, the Master course conceived by the Messerli Research Institute entitled “Interdisciplinary Master in Human-Animal Interactions” will start in the academic year of 2012/2013 and will be taught in English. The Messerli Research Institute was established by the Messerli Foundation under the aegis of the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna and in collaboration with the Medical University of Vienna and the University of Vienna. The Institute’s research should contribute to improving the way humans treat animals. The Messerli Research Institute is thus facing the societal challenges of supporting humans in their responsibility for animals and of using its research to help educate society.

Contact: Prof. Ludwig Huber
Tel: +43 1 25077-2680
E-mail: ludwig.huber@vetmeduni.ac.at

Adapted from vetmeduni press release March 29, 2012

EU/SUI: Cell-based potency assay for BoNT approved

Following last year’s approval of its proprietary, cell-based potency assay (CBPA) in the USA and Canada, US based Allergan Inc. in January 2012 announced approval by the Swiss regulatory authority Swissmedic of this method to replace the use of mice in determining the stability and potency of its botulinum neurotoxin (BoNT) containing products Botox® and Vistabel®. In February, 2012 this news was followed by a press release from Allergan stating that it had received two positive opinions from EU regulatory agencies on the suitability of the CBPA to replace the LD50 test on mice for testing of these products. One opinion was released by the French authority Agence Française de Sécurité Sanitaire des Produits de Santé (AFSSAPS) for Vistabel® and serves as a reference for 28 other European countries besides France in accordance with the mutual recognition process. These are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The second opinion is from the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) concerning Botox®. This serves as a reference for 13 countries besides Ireland. These are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. This approval already has been confirmed by the German Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (BfArM) and the respective agencies in Iceland and Norway.

Allergan stated that it seeks to implement the animal free test as soon as possible after approval and already filed with the relevant health authorities in Europe in June 2011. No time line is known so far as to when the company will start to sell non-animal tested BoNT products. The company envisages that the new test will replace up to 95% of Allergan’s animal tests over the next three years, provided that other authorities worldwide accept the cell based method. According to a personal communication, Allergan stated that it would fully switch to the animal free method in those countries in which it receives approval. It is Allergan’s stated aim to fully abolish its LD50 tests in mice worldwide.

The approval of Allergan’s CBPA is currently limited to Allergan’s products and does not apply to BoNT products of other companies producing or selling such products like Ipsen Ltd., Merz-Pharma GmbH & Co. KgaA, Galderma Ltd., and Esai Co., Ltd. or to companies in South Korea (Medy-Tox Inc.) and China (btxa) that produce BoNT products main-
ly for the Asian market. Allergan has announced that it is prepared to licence the assay to other companies, which would then have to apply to the authorities after validating the applicability of the assay to their products.

Up to now, the LD$_{50}$ potency assay on mice is the standard for potency and stability testing for all BoNT products and is required by regulatory authorities worldwide. This test determines the lethal dose of the BoNT ingredient or final product in mice. Different doses of the toxin are injected intraperitoneally into groups of mice, and lethality is calculated for each group. This test strategy is associated with severe distress for the animals, which mostly die within three to four days by asphyxiation. On the basis of assured data obtained from an undercover investigation, it has been possible to estimate the number of mice used in LD$_{50}$ tests for BoNT products at more than 600,000 per year for all companies worldwide (Bitz, 2010). The animal test is known to be limited in its validity owing to its lack of specificity for botulinum neurotoxin type A and its variability between assays and laboratories.

The LD$_{50}$ potency assay is conducted regardless of whether the batch is intended for medical or aesthetic use, e.g., the temporary treatment of frown lines. The EU Cosmetics Directive has banned acute toxicity tests for cosmetic ingredients and products, but BoNT products are classified as pharmaceuticals because they are injected into the body, despite 50% or more use being for aesthetic purposes. Thus BoNT products represent an exemption from the primary aim of the Cosmetics Directive to end animal tests for products used for aesthetic purposes.

The use of BoNT products in humans has been associated with cases of systemic adverse reactions such as respiratory compromise as well as death. The ongoing EU-wide approval of Allergan’s CBPA is a major milestone towards an end to all BoNT testing on animals, be it for aesthetic or medical purposes.

However, the elementary ethical conflict of using severe animal tests for the safety evaluation of products used for aesthetic purposes will remain until the CBPA or other non-animal tests can be applied to all BoNT products. This would result in a full ban on the LD$_{50}$ potency test in Europe according to Directive 2010/63/EU, which requires “that a procedure using animals is not carried out if another test strategy not entailing live animals is recognized under the legislation of the Union.” Until then, Allergan will also legally be able to continue using the LD$_{50}$ assay.

Doctors Against Animal Experiments and its partners at the European Coalition to End Animal Experiments (ECEAE) call on politics to increase the pressure on the other manufacturers of BoNT products by obliging them to work intensively towards the validation and approval of the CBPA for their products instead of proceeding with the development of methods that still use animals or whose successful approval is uncertain. This can, in a first step, be achieved by prohibiting animal experiments for BoNT products intended for aesthetic use, i.e., by replacing the LD$_{50}$ assay for this purpose with the CBPA in the European Pharmacopoeia. The ultimate goal should be the full replacement of the LD$_{50}$ assay for the testing of BoNT products for aesthetic as well as for medical purposes by the CBPA.

**Reference**


Silke Bitz
Doctors Against
Animal Experiments
Germany

---

**EU: Assessment of cell transformation assays (CTAs) by EURL ECVAM**

The European Union Reference Laboratory for Alternatives to Animal Testing (EURL ECVAM) has published a recommendation addressing three in vitro cell transformation assays (CTAs), the Syrian hamster embryonic (SHE) CTA performed at pH 6.7 and pH 7.0, and the BALB/c 3T3 CTA.

This EURL ECVAM recommendation addresses the performance of the CTAs and provides advice on possible regulatory applicability, limitations, and proper scientific use of the methods. It also suggests possible follow-up activities$^1$.

This recommendation, which underwent public commenting, recommends the development of an OECD Test Guideline for the Syrian SHE CTA and, considering the limited differences between the protocols at pH 6.7 and pH 7.0, it suggests that both SHE CTAs should be incorporated into a single Test Guideline. The BALB/c 3T3 CTA protocol should be further used to expand on the reproducibility of the assay and confirm the suitability of the new statistical approach and data interpretation procedure applied. However, the recommendation also states that, from a 3Rs perspective, this CTA should be considered more appropriate than the SHE CTA since it uses a cell line instead of primary cells. In general the recommendation concludes that the CTAs have the potential for partial replacement and reduction when used in a weight of evi-

---

$^1$ The ECVAM study reports, the ESAC Working Group report, the ESAC opinion and the EURL-ECVAM recommendation on cell transformation assays are available at: [http://ihcp.jrc.ec.europa.eu/our_activities/all-animal-testing](http://ihcp.jrc.ec.europa.eu/our_activities/all-animal-testing)
dence approach for hazard identification and risk assessment.

The details of the ECVAM study on which the recommendation is based, together with the recommended protocols and photo catalogues developed during this effort, is electronically published ahead of print in a special issue of Mutation Research on cell transformation2 (Special issue on cell transformation, in press) and will be made available in DB-ALM3 in the form of INVITTOX protocols.

The carcinogenic potential of compounds is a crucial aspect in human hazard and risk assessment of chemicals. Among the in vitro alternatives that have been developed for predicting carcinogenicity, CTAs have been shown to involve a multistage process that closely models important stages of in vivo carcinogenesis and have the potential to detect both genotoxic and non-genotoxic carcinogens. These assays have been in use for decades and are considered to provide useful additional information to more routinely employed tests for assessing carcinogenic potential.

The OECD finalized in 2007 a Detailed Review Paper (DRP No. 31) on three CTAs (Syrian hamster embryo [SHE] cell assay, BALB/c 3T3 and C3H101/2 established cell line assays) for the detection of chemical carcinogens4 with the aim of determining whether the available data were sufficient for developing OECD Test Guidelines for any of the three CTAs. As a follow-up to this OECD effort, the OECD Working Group of National Coordinators of the Test Guideline Programme (WNT) recommended that a formal evaluation of the assays, in particular focusing on development of standardized transferable protocols and further information on assay reproducibility, should be considered prior to development of draft OECD Test Guidelines.

On the background of the above, and following the recommendations of two ECVAM expert meetings, ECVAM coordinated a study aiming at the standardization and subsequent evaluation of the three CTA protocols mentioned above with regard to their transferability and reproducibility. The study complemented the OECD DRP No. 31 by providing prospective data on reliability while addressing predictive capacity only to a limited extent, since an extensive body of evidence on the predictivity of CTAs was available and summarized in the DRP.

EURL ECVAM requested its Scientific Advisory Committee (ESAC), to perform a peer review and provide scientific advice on the performance of the study. Both, the report of the ESAC Working Group that carried out the peer review on behalf of ESAC and the ESAC Opinion that was based on this report, were adopted by ESAC in February 2011 [http://ihcp.jrc.ec.europa.eu/our_activities/alt-animal-testing/], and made available to the OECD in time for its annual WNT meeting in April 2011.

Raffaella Corvi, PhD
European Commission
DG Joint Research Centre (JRC)
Institute for Health and Consumer Protection - Validation of Alternative Methods Unit
European Union Reference Laboratory for Alternative Methods to Animal Testing (EURL-ECVAM)
Via E. Fermi 2749 TP 580
21027 Ispra (VA) ITALY

2 Special issue on cell transformation, R. Corvi and Ph. Vanparys, Guest Editors, Mutation Research, Genetic Toxicology and Environmental Research, in press. Link to the Preface: http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1383571812000423

EU: Call for applications for EPAA 2012 Science Award

The EPAA is offering the Science Award for the second time to support the optimization and regulatory acceptance of 3Rs alternative methods. The award provides young scientists (less than 8 years post-graduate experience) with the opportunity to cooperate with experienced scientists from various industry sectors and the European Commission. The recipient will be invited to participate in EPAA or international events to report on the project, like at the World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences and EPAA Annual Conferences. Financial support of up to € 100,000 will be provided to the institution of the successful candidate to allow the extension of an existing research contract for a period of up to one year in order to promote the transition from existing innovative alternative approach/method from the experimental stage towards regulatory acceptance and industrial application. The focus of any proposal should be on practical steps to improve the acceptance and implementation of the 3Rs in the regulatory context.

• Deadline: June 30, 2012

243
GER: Calls for nominations for animal protection prizes

The Ministry of the Environment of Rhineland-Palatinate calls for nominations for the Animal Protection Prize 2012, which carries € 6,000 in prize money, in the three categories: exceptional voluntary contribution to animal protection; exemplary contribution to animal protection by a person; exemplary occupational handling of animals.

- Deadline: August 31, 2012
- More information: http://www.mulewf.rlp.de/tiere/tierschutz

The Ministry of the Environment of Hessen calls for nominations for the Animal Protection Research Prize 2012, which carries € 15,000 in prize money, for exceptional scientific contributions that may lead to the reduction or replacement of animal experiments in research, education or in the production of biomedical products or that lead to a significant reduction in the pain and distress caused to experimental animals.

- Deadline: July 15, 2012
- More information: tierschutz@hmuelv.hessen.de

IND: Government calls to stop animal experiments in medical, pharmacy, and other life sciences education

In a letter dated January 13, 2012, the Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA), Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India, has called on the Ministry of Human Resource Development – Department of Higher Education, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the University Grants Commission, the Pharmacy Council of India, and the Medical Council of India to discontinue dissection and animal experimentation associated with the teaching of medical, pharmacy and other graduate and post graduate courses in life sciences in the universities and colleges and to introduce the use of alternatives to animal experimentation. It stated that in light of the availability of effective alternatives in the form of CD’s, computer simulations, manikin models, in vitro methods, etc. the use of animals in the existing circumstances is a contravention of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960, which states that one duty of CPCSEA is to ensure that “experiments on animals are avoided wherever it is possible to do so; as for example in medical schools, hospitals, colleges and the like, if other teaching devices such as books, models, films and the like, may equally suffice.”

This letter was written days after the 99th Indian Science Congress, which for the first time presented a plenary session on alternatives in education organized by the Mahatma Gandhi Doerenkamp Center (MGDC) (see Conference Report, p. 216 and follows the publication of guidelines on the replacement of animal experiments in anatomy, physiology, and ecology issued by the University Grants Commission in late 2011.

When this demand is achieved, India may be the first country to abolish animal experiments and dissection from tertiary education worldwide.

IND: Medical colleges in India sensitized about alternatives

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India organized a series of medical education workshops at premier medical colleges in India during January 16-20, 2012, aimed at sensitizing instructors and faculty of medical colleges offering Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programs to dispense with the use of animals in pharmacology and physiology laboratory exercises. The idea was that if the teachers who design the curriculum are convinced about the advanced pedagogy that the non-animal simulation models offer, they will not only be prepared to change to the non-animal methods of teaching and learning, but will put pressure on the regulatory authority of India concerned with medical education, the Medical Council of India (MCI), to institute a switch to non-animal methods in the MBBS Regulations.

The workshops were conducted at St. Johns Medical College, Bangalore (January 16, 2012); Jawaharlal Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER), Pondicherry (January 17-18, 2012); All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi (January 19, 2012); and Christian Medical College (CMC), Ludhiana (January 20, 2010). Dr Chaitanya Koduri, Science Policy Advisor, PETA India, was the
Chief organizer of these programs and is now guiding numerous workshop participants who have expressed strong interest in replacing animal use in their respective MBBS training programs.

Key speakers at these workshops included Dr. Mohammad A. Akbarsha (Director, Mahatma Gandhi Doerenkamp Center (MGDC) for Alternatives to use of Animals in Life Science Education, also Gandhi-Gruber-Doerenkamp Chair, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, India), Dr. David Dewhurst (Professor of E-learning, University of Edinburgh, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, Edinburgh, UK), and Dr. John Pawlowski (Assistant Professor, Harvard Medical School and Director of Thoracic Anesthesia, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston, USA). Dr. Ramaswamy Raveendran (Professor of Pharmacology, JIPMER, Pondicherry), Dr. Y. K. Gupta (Professor of Pharmacology, AIIMS, New Delhi), and Dr. Dinesh K. Badyal (Professor and Head of the Department of Pharmacology, CMC, Ludhiana) also spoke at their respective programs.

Classroom practicals in India consume approximately 10 percent of the total animals used in scientific applications nationwide, whereas in other countries this figure is 1 to 2 percent. The curricular regulations of MBBS still allow classroom/laboratory exercises using animals for physiology, pharmacology and surgical skills development. Frogs, rabbits, rats, mice, and guinea pigs are the most commonly used animals in medical school training in India. However, it is actually illegal to use frogs in experiments since they are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 of India and are included in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. Almost all medical schools in the USA, Canada, and UK have eliminated use of animals in medical courses and replaced them with Computer Assisted Learning (CAL), Virtual Reality Simulators (VRS), and Human Patient Simulators (HPS). These methods are well accepted by students and scientific studies demonstrate that learning objectives are met.

The speakers discussed the various challenges that might arise in adopting e-learning and how to overcome those problems, which learning resources are available and how they can be obtained, the advantages of using simulators, and the positive experiences of Indian teachers who have already introduced alternatives into their courses. Numerous demonstrations of exemplary digital learning resources were integrated into the presentations.

Evaluation of feedback forms from the participants of the programs, mostly teachers of physiology and pharmacology from medical colleges, showed that most teachers had been convinced to switch from animal experiments to non-animal alternatives in their courses. PETA India plans to put this evaluation before the MCI in the faith that the MCI will institute an amendment to the MBBS Regulations for mandatory total replacement of animals in classroom laboratory exercises with non-animal alternative models.

The Times of India, The Hindu, and other media published articles on the success of the workshops which mark a beginning of a new era within the academic movement towards humane medical education. This is similar to the recent joint effort by the MGDC, PETA India, People for Animals, and the International Centre for Alternatives in Research and Education (I-CARE) – all of whom successfully convinced India’s University Grants Commission (UGC) to adopt guidelines that recommend the phasing out of animal experiments in life science and zoology courses across India.

Mohammad A. Akbarsha
Mahatma Gandhi-Doerenkamp Center for Alternatives to Use of Animals in Life Science Education, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli 620024, India
e-mail: mgdcaua@yahoo.in

Chaitanya Koduri
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India
PO Box 28260, Juhu, Mumbai 400 049, India
e-mail: ChaitanyaK@PETAIndia.org

INT: Replacing animal use in teaching in Eastern European universities

A workshop held in Belgrade in 2009, and involving university faculty from 13 countries in Eastern Europe, concluded that there is still substantial use of animals in teaching the basic sciences such as pharmacology and physiology (Dewhurst & Kojic, 2010). One of the clear recommendations of the workshop was that providing computer-based alternatives to laboratory classes which currently use animals in local languages would make the alternatives more acceptable to both students and faculty and would more likely result in a reduction in animal use.

This collaborative project has enabled the University of Edinburgh to work with faculty in a number of eastern European universities to convert current English-language versions of existing computer-based alternatives to common practical classes into local language versions, introduce the translated alternatives into teaching, and provide the translated versions free of charge to interested universities.

1 The workshop was sponsored by the Doerenkamp-Zbinden Foundation, Kuesnacht ZH, Switzerland
A total of 15 local language versions of various existing computer-based alternatives have been developed. Thirteen of these are Eastern European language versions and these are now freely available both in the countries in which they have been developed and to a wider global audience. In addition, as a direct result of this project, German language versions of two alternatives (Langendorff Heart and Cat Nictitating Membrane) have also been developed through a collaboration with staff at the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg.

Faculty from participating universities were able to select any of the 15 or so computer-based alternatives supplied by Sheffield BioScience Programs (www.sheffbp.co.uk) they wished to translate and were guided to choose one which would be a direct replacement for an animal lab in their university. The following selections were made:
- Autonomic Pharmacology – Ukraine
- Intestinal Motility - Romania
- Renal Function in Humans - Lithuania, Bulgaria, Macedonia
- Rat Blood Pressure - Romania
- Frog Heart – Romania, Macedonia
- Langendorff Heart – Czech Republic, Germany
- Blood Physiology - Serbia
- Intestinal Absorption – Romania
- Cat Nictitating Membrane – Macedonia, Germany
- Nerve Physiology - Serbia
- The majority of the local language versions of the computer-based alternatives were developed during the period April 2010 to June 2011 with the development schedule being determined by when the different universities expected to implement the alternatives in their teaching (e.g. semester 1 or 2 of academic year 2010-11).

Although not a defined part of the project we also requested participating institutions to survey students and faculty using the alternatives to provide us with information about acceptability, views on replacing animal experiments, usefulness of the alternatives, etc. The Project Directors (Dewhurst and Kojic) developed the survey instruments which consisted of two separate questionnaires, one aimed at faculty and one aimed at students. These were made available to participating universities both online (using Bristol Online Surveys which the University of Edinburgh subscribes to) and as MSWord documents which could be printed and completed offline. Those completed on paper (offline) were posted to the University of Edinburgh where the data were transcribed to the online surveys for subsequent analysis. To date we have received 13 completed questionnaires from academic staff in 5 universities and 394 completed questionnaires from students on 7 different university courses. The surveys were opened in November 2010 and officially closed at the end of December 2011 to allow for further questionnaire submissions. A preliminary analysis of the data has been carried out (see below) and a more thorough analysis will take place shortly.

**Preliminary analysis**

1. University of Skopje, Medical Faculty, Macedonia
   - Students n=89 studying General Medicine
     - Personal computer ownership – 100%
     - Use of animals in lab classes – 100%
     - Use of alternative (Renal Function in Humans): time-tabled event; lasted 30 min – 2.5 h; tutor provides schedule and explains learning objectives; preferred animal experiments: 54 agree; 21 disagree; 14 neutral; would prefer not to replace animal labs with alternatives: 39 agree; 33 disagree; 17 neutral.
     - Use of alternative (Renal Function in Humans): used mostly for leisure, email, Internet
     - Use of animals in lab classes: 39 agree; 33 disagree; 14 neutral
     - Students spent circa 80 min using the alternative; worked in small groups.
     - All use animal experiments in their teaching; usually 2 h classes; equipment levels at their university limits which lab classes they can run.

2. Belgrade Medical School, Serbia
   - 51 of 60 students and 2 of 3 staff members would find it easier to follow the computer simulation program during practical course if it were translated from English to Serbian.
   - All use animal experiments in their teaching; usually 2 h classes; equipment levels at their university limits which lab classes they can run.

**Alternative (Renal Function in Humans)**: used in timetabled 1 h session; tutor present; workbook provided; students spent circa 80 min using the alternative; worked in small groups. Believe that students learn effectively from computer programs; easy to use; divided (2 agree, 2 disagree) that animal experiments necessary; appreciated the flexibility of learning afforded to students; liked the fact that they had lots of time to help students to learn and agreed that they learned well from each other; liked the quality and reliability of the data provided; found the built-in self-assessment questions very useful.

**Use of animals**: students do object to – using animals; agree that inconsistent data can be a problem; would prefer to replace more animal labs with alternatives (3 agree; 1 neutral).

**Reference**


David Dewhurst  
College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine  
University of Edinburgh, UK

Zvezdana Z. Kojic  
University of Belgrade, School of Medicine, Institute of Physiology, Belgrade, Serbia
UK: Call for 2012 CRACK IT Challenges

Winners of the 2011 CRACK IT Challenges competition were announced by the NC3Rs at its Annual Science Review meeting on February 28, 2012. The Challenges are funded by NC3Rs with in-kind contributions from industry sponsors AstraZeneca, Huntingdon Life Sciences, Lilly, Syngenta, and Unilever. The 2011 Challenges and winning group leaders were:

- Wireless recording of the electrophysiology of cognition in psychiatric disease models – Dr E. Rodriguez-Villegas, Imperial College and Ervitech (£0.5 million)
- Rodent Big Brother: automated recording of rodent activity and temperature in the home cage – Prof. D. Armstrong from Actual Analytics and Prof. J. Pratt, University of Strathclyde (£0.5 million)
- Improving the predictive capacity of in vitro cytokine release assays to reduce animal use and drug attrition (£0.5 million)
- Improved in vitro to in vivo extrapolation in chemical safety risk assessment of human systemic toxicity – Prof. M. Glennie, University of Southampton (£1 million)
- BADIPS: Generating human induced pluripotent stem cells to study bipolar affective disorder – Dr D. Williams, University of Liverpool (£1 million)

The NC3Rs is now calling for the submission of new challenges and mini-challenges (under £50,000) for the 2012 competition by May 11. These challenges will be ideas or problems that if solved would reduce the use of animals or improve animal welfare.

If you have a challenge involving the use of animals and can offer expertise, in-kind contributions and/or co-funding, and a true collaboration with the winner of your Challenge contact the CRACK IT team at crackitenquiries@nc3rs.org.uk or +44 20 7611 2233 or submit your Challenge through the form on the CRACK IT website (http://www.crackit.org.uk/). The CRACK IT team will offer a range of support, from defining your Challenge so that it engages the global 3Rs brain to publicity to connect diverse ‘crackers’ from different disciplines and sectors.

Adapted from NC3Rs press release
March 1, 2012

UK: QSAR resource to reduce animal tests carried out under REACH

Seeking to maximize the value of computational modeling in avoiding animal testing for the European Union’s Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) Foundation has produced a free resource for potential registrants, identifying sources of information and expertise on the use of Quantitative Structure-Activity Relationships (QSARs). The short brochure “QSARs and REACH: A Guide to Sources of Information and Advice” was produced in consultation with leading experts in the field and lists publicly available online resources and selected contact points for individuals and organizations that can offer support to REACH registrants and consultants on the use of QSARs.

QSARs predict chemical behavior directly from chemical structure and simulate adverse effects in cells, tissues and lab animals, minimizing the need to use animal tests to comply with regulatory requirements for human health and ecotoxicology endpoints. The REACH regulation promotes the use of alternative methods and states that animal testing should be a last resort. The use of QSAR is specifically encouraged. However, while QSARs have already been used in many registrations, it is clear from the European Chemicals Agency’s (ECHA) 2011 report, “The Use of Alternatives to Testing on Animals for the REACH Regulation”, that many opportunities to use them have been missed and that, in some cases, registrants have not submitted QSAR data in accordance with REACH’s requirements, leading to potential failure at the REACH compliance check, additional costs, and increased animal testing.

The list was compiled by PETA in consultation with PETA US and contacts within industry and academia, and selection and inclusion was based entirely on expert judgment – the list contains no paid advertising. The resource is currently being distributed gratis to chemical companies, consultants, and other stakeholders and is available online at PETA.org.uk/QSAR.

Jessica Sandler
Posted on AltTox.org
February 27, 2012