

**Dear readers,**

As you have noticed, the number of pages per ALTEX issue has increased greatly over the past few years, averaging 140 in 2013. Our impact factor is attracting many high level manuscripts and despite increasing the bulk of ALTEX we must decline publication of about half the papers we receive (ALTEX acceptance rate for 2012 was 55%). Instead of increasing our subscription rates to cover the associated higher production costs, we have decided to introduce a publication fee for manuscripts that are submitted and accepted after November 1, 2013 (for details see <http://www.altex.ch/Instructions-for-Authors.34.html>). As ALTEX is a full open access journal listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals, the new publication fees will be covered by many institutions from budgets designated to support open access publication, so this policy should not burden our authors' research budgets.

Please visit our updated homepage where you can read ALTEX "Online first" articles before they are printed and can download manuscripts or browse the entire content of many older issues of ALTEX, including Special Issues. We are still working on completing this database.

In this issue of ALTEX, Hartung and Corsini delve into the subject of immunotoxicity testing. Chemical exposure may cause either suppression or activation of the human immune system, both of which are apparently well buffered in healthy persons but may have serious consequences in combination with other pathological challenges. The authors therefore argue for the inclusion of alternative methods for immunotoxicity testing into integrated testing strategies.

Schildknecht and colleagues describe how they introduce genetic modifications, such as fluorescence reporters and genes of interest, into LUHMES cells to perform elegant studies in real time on single living cells, measuring neurite outgrowth or mitochondrial movement and their disturbance by toxicants.

Traditionally the risk assessment process for cosmetic ingredients has relied on information on the expected exposure of consumers and an understanding of skin sensitizer relative potency derived from animal tests. MacKay and colleagues discuss what tools are needed to move from a qualitative descrip-

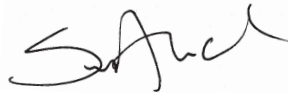
tion of an adverse outcome pathway for skin sensitization to a human health risk assessment based on non-animal data.

The molecular mechanisms of environmental exposure induced health changes, including epigenetic effects and trans-generational inheritance of phenotype following exposure, are of great current interest to public health. Greally and Jacobs review and discuss both *in vitro* and *in vivo* methods of assessing these effects for endocrine disruptors and show future challenges and perspectives towards risk assessment of environmentally induced epigenetic effects.

Aquatic food makes up over 40% of global animal food products, but contaminating marine biotoxins must be controlled to protect consumer health. A <sup>t4</sup> report by Daneshian et al. on current aspects of marine biotoxin testing provides a detailed review on the classes of marine biotoxins, their structures, symptoms and treatment of intoxication, as well as analytical and functional *in vitro* assays that have been developed as alternatives to the rodent bioassays. They formulate various recommendations on hazard monitoring and risk assessment, on better documenting cases of human intoxication, and on further functional assays that should be developed.

In our Corners section we welcome a contribution from EUSAAT in addition to updates from ASCCT, CAAT, ICCVAM/NICEATM, and IIVS. The News and Calendar bring you up to date with current and upcoming developments and events in our field.

Thank you for your continued loyalty to ALTEX in 2013.



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