



## Dear readers,

The staff and board of ALTEX wish you all the best for 2013.

We heartily congratulate Franz Gruber who recently turned 70. Franz began contributing to ALTEX in 1986 and moved to Zurich 20 years ago to focus his energy on building ALTEX into the journal it is today as the editor in chief. Franz is currently CEO of ALTEX, president of the Doerenkamp-Zbinden Foundation, and a member of numerous commissions for the scientific evaluation of proposals for the development of alternative methods.

We also congratulate Horst Spielmann who was named State Commissioner for Animal Protection (*Landestierschutzbeauftragter*) of Berlin in December and will surely direct a bright spotlight onto the potential of alternatives to animal experiments on the political stage of Germany's capital in this capacity.

In this issue we present three contributions arising from the first workshop of the Evidence-Based Toxicology Collaboration (EBTC), i.e., a workshop report introducing EBT and detailing both the invited and open discussion of all presentations, and two main papers presented at the workshop: Richard Judson and colleagues discuss how high-throughput systems can be integrated into toxicity testing in a timely and effective manner, specifically by employing this methodology to pick out suspicious candidates from a broad array of substances and move them to the front of the line for further targeted testing. Ellen Silbergeld and Roberta Scherer discuss what evidence-based toxicology can learn from the well-established evidence-based medicine and health care initiative of the Cochrane Collaboration and what it will need to design from scratch or adapt to its specific requirements. They explain the potential benefits of an evidence-based toxicology for safety assessments and the possible scope that EBT may cover.

Thomas Hartung and colleagues from CAAT give us Food for thought ... on how integrated testing strategies (ITS) can overcome a variety of problems of stand-alone assays by systematically combining them under a specified, quality-assured and adaptable strategy to benefit safety assessment. They consider what criteria will be central to establishing such strategies.

Emilio Benfenati et al. report on a study they undertook to compare the prediction of the bioconcentration factor by three QSAR platforms for three chosen substances. Then they asked a panel of toxicologists to judge the reliability of the results. The study illustrates both the use of the models and the pitfalls of employing them without sufficient expertise and stringency.

The paper by Mélody Dutot and colleagues argues for improvements to the *in vitro* method used to evaluate the toxicity

of contact lens care solutions. These proposed changes aim to make the test better reflect how the solutions are employed by consumers and what contact they have with the ocular surface. Further they show that rinsing a contact lens in saline or marine solution after soaking it in the contact lens solution greatly reduces its toxicity to corneal cells as shown by higher enzymatic activity of these cells in an MTT assay.

In their regular corners, the ASCCT, CAAT, ICCVAM-NICEATM, and IIVS update us on their recent and planned activities.

In this issue's news Joanne Zurlo, our new North American Editor, introduces herself with a brief bio. We inform you of the publication of new guidelines and reports, a new ATLA supplement, the winners of prizes in the field of alternatives awarded in Germany and the UK, and current developments in Germany that appear to question its former commitment to being a leading proponent of the protection of animals used for scientific purposes: the draft of the new German Animal Protection Law has passed the *Bundestag* without incorporation of numerous improvements suggested by national animal protection organizations. If it is ratified by the *Bundesrat* no further improvements to the national law on the use of animals for scientific purposes will be possible until the EU Directive 2010/63/EU itself comes under revision. Considering that the former Directive came into force in 1986, this will not be happening in the near future. Also, ending a drawn-out legal battle that has caused much public interest, the Higher Administrative Court of Bremen ruled that neurobiological experiments on macaques considered of moderate to high severity at the University of Bremen can continue for two further years, thus again setting the freedom of research above the protection of animals and disappointing many advocates of animal protection.

We would like to alert you to the upcoming issue of ALTEX Proceedings on the alternatives session at the last Indian Science Conference, which will be published online shortly. The main theme of the next issue of TIERethik, our German-language journal on the animal-human relationship, will be *Tierschutz* (animal protection).

Hoping you enjoy this first issue of ALTEX in 2013,

Sonja von Aulock