



Dear readers of ALTEX,

Welcome to the anniversary year of ALTEX. By starting the 26th volume, we are leaving behind a quarter century of ALTEX with our sights firmly fixed on the future. Where 2008 was the year of relocation – two issues were literally compiled between cardboard boxes, 2009 will be the year of new beginnings. We will share the history of ALTEX with our readers in one of the issues in 2009.

The project “t⁴ – Transatlantic Think Tank of Toxicology” of the Doerenkamp-Zbinden Foundation (DZF), has taken up its work. And this also means more work for ALTEX, because our journal has been designated the official organ of the t⁴ project. We are proud of this and will live up to the challenge. Four in depth special reviews and two workshop reports will be published each year to keep ALTEX readers up to date with t⁴ activities. The prologue, published in ALTEX 2008/3 (Marcel Leist et al.: The biological and ethical basis of the use of human embryonic stem cells for *in vitro* test systems or cell therapy) already gives a first impression of how hot topics shall be illuminated from different perspectives.

For all new ALTEX readers: The t⁴ project connects the toxicologically oriented DZF university chairs in Konstanz, Baltimore and Utrecht and shall ensure that the vision of shifting the approach of toxicology from animal experiments to modern *in vitro* test systems, as recently presented by the National Academy of Science of the USA, is set into practice and integrated into European research activities. The first t⁴ meeting will take place in March 2009 as a satellite meeting of the annual Society of Toxicology (SOT) congress in Baltimore.

Our first “Food for thought...” contribution of the year deals with the subject of money. Bottini and Hartung have looked into how much money is moved around the world by animal experiments. For the first time we are getting a picture of the economy of animal experiments – a view from a new perspective that is sure to make us think. Ursula Sauer and co-authors introduce a new search engine that uses semantic approaches to finding alternative methods on the Internet. We are curious how popular this method will become. Will we all switch from googling to Go3R to search for articles? We anxiously await the day on which the Draize test on the rabbit eye is finally stricken from the regulatory guidelines. Manzer and coauthors describe a

further improvement of their model that uses SV40 transformed human keratocytes. Stingl and coauthors performed a literature search to find out how 20 years of research on essential hypertension using transgenic animals has changed the treatment approach. Hardly, if at all, is their devastating conclusion.

In two news items, Goris et al. report on a clever method to determine the transmission rate of foot and mouth disease using already published data, i.e. without new animal experiments. And Nick Jukes, coordinator of InterNICHE, reports on an extremely successful mission to South America, aiming to catalyse the move to ethically acceptable educational methods in university training there.

Two congress reports round off this issue. In the news section, we are happy to report on the prizes awarded to Beate Kraemer and Rodger Curren for their longstanding perseverance in the area of alternative methods. And we are pleased that a number of replacement methods were recently endorsed in Europe.

One item of news is very disappointing: ICCVAM, the US validation body, will not recognise the alternative whole blood pyrogen test, which was developed in Europe, as a full replacement test. No one seems to mind that people who earn their money off the other, less effective, replacement method – the Limulus test – were involved in making this decision. When economic interests of companies can prevent the introduction of alternative methods, we are in dire straits. How shall one continue to acquire financial support for the development and research into alternative methods, when their introduction is prevented by special interests of stakeholders tolerated by the regulatory bodies? This question brings us full circle, back to the first article about economic aspects of animal experiments and alternative methods.

Hoping you enjoy this issue of ALTEX,
Your

Franz P. Gruber