



# Alternatives Across Latin America: Catalysing Change in the Curriculum

Nick Jukes

InterNICHE, Leicester, England

## Summary

*A 6-week series of seminars addressing replacement of harmful animal use in education and training was held across Latin America in March-April 2008. Organised by InterNICHE and partner organisations in Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, the events built on the experience of previous major outreach in Russia and India. Up to 6 full-day seminars were held at universities and independent venues in each country. Smaller meetings with campaigners, teachers and professional bodies complemented the seminars. All events included spoken presentations, demonstrations and free trials of a wide range of alternatives. Speakers included InterNICHE experts and those from the host countries who are involved in replacement work. Partner organisations were empowered through the process of planning and execution of the seminars, and the tour helped to identify and provide support to others who are progressing humane education initiatives. Further collaboration is now planned. Information on the current situation concerning animal use and alternatives, including laws and regulations, was also gathered from each country. The tour succeeded in raising awareness and generating interest in replacement alternatives, also by national-level interviews and media coverage. Information and freeware alternatives were widely distributed, and further translations of material into Spanish and Portuguese are in progress. To continue the hands-on access to alternatives provided at the seminars, a Mexican/Central American Alternatives loan System has been established, and others are being built in Peru and Brazil. The donation of computers and alternatives to selected universities is also being planned in order to establish multimedia laboratories that will promote alternatives through example.*

*Keywords: alternatives, education, replacement, Latin America, InterNICHE*

## 1 Introduction

A 6-week series of seminars to address and catalyse replacement of harmful animal use in education and training was held across Latin America in March-April 2008. The outreach tour, titled *Alternative Methods for a Humane Education: Best Practice and Innovation in the Life Sciences*, was organised by InterNICHE and partner organisations in Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. Building on the experience of major InterNICHE outreach tours and training in Russia and India, full-day seminars were held at up to 6 universities and independent venues across each country.

## 2 Nature of the events

The seminars were organised with much planning, commitment and teamwork on a voluntary basis. Existing contacts and networks were used, as well as those made and built for the purpose. Responsibility for different elements of the planning was concentrated at different levels – international, national and

local. The degree of decentralisation was negotiated in order to encourage diversity of style and content in the events and the use of local knowledge and skills, whilst guaranteeing the focus and aims of the series of events and their consistency across the international stage.

The knowledge of the co-organisers allowed an effective targeting of intervention and support concerning harmful animal use and alternatives at universities. Many seminars were organised at prominent and influential universities, often in conjunction with progressive departments whose successes are helping to catalyse change across the region with innovative projects. Some were held where on-going discussion or conflict concerning harmful animal use is situated. Such targeting optimised the potential of the outreach to support and consolidate progressive change or to help bring about resolution to problems.

Speakers included national and international InterNICHE experts, addressing themes such as best practice in life science education and training, the importance of caring as a clinical skill for the competent animal doctor, and national overviews about animal use and alternatives. Other speakers included teachers and life science professionals, student conscientious



objectors, developers of alternatives, philosophers, psychologists and lawyers. Many are involved in humane education and replacement work in the host countries. The seminars included demonstrations and trials of alternatives, and were followed by round tables and meetings with teachers, university officials and academic councils. The events often had active support and participation of the deans and rectors of the host institutes. Campaigners' workshops were also organised in many cities to bring together student and teacher activists.

The wide range of alternatives used for demonstrations and hands-on trial were brought from the InterNICHE Alternatives Loan System, provided by producers in Latin America, or shown as film clips. These ranged from multimedia pharmacology software to simulators and virtual reality (VR) in professional surgery training; from veterinary clinical skills training mannekins to apparatus for self-experimentation in physiology; from ethically sourced animal cadavers and plastination techniques to the many learning opportunities presented by clinical work with patients. The choices of specific alternatives were based on InterNICHE experience and that of the specific cultural and curricular realities in the host countries, such as the widespread killing or live use of dogs in practical classes.

InterNICHE material in Spanish and Portuguese, as well as several indigenous languages, was distributed widely. This included introductory texts, the book *From Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse* (InterNICHE, 2003), the film *Alternatives in Education* (InterNICHE, 1999), freeware physiology and pharmacology alternatives, and the translated texts of spoken presentations and other resources. Newly published Portuguese-language books on humane education were also promoted at the events in Brazil.

### 3 Impact and discussion

Among the many host institutes engaged in progressive curricular change and acknowledged for their innovation were the following: the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Alas Peruanas in Trujillo (Peru) for its commitment to humane education by providing students wide access to clinical learning experiences and to non-animal alternative tools; the Faculty of Medicine at ABC in São Paulo (Brazil) for its replacement of animal experiments in medical education; and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of São Paulo for the preservation and use of ethically sourced animal cadavers for surgical skills acquisition.

Others included the Faculty of Veterinary Science at UNICEN in Tandil (Argentina) for its recognition of the increased professionalism engendered by working with advanced, humane tools and approaches instead of the "old school" traditions of animal experimentation and the "gaucho" mentality; and the new Center for Animal Alternatives in Education (CAAE) at the University of Guadalajara (Mexico) for beginning to make real its bold vision of a high quality and fully

humane education through a well-designed strategy for active replacement of harmful animal use.

Despite the progress being made, however, it was very clear from the experience of conscientious objectors how the discrimination and psychological trauma associated with harmful animal use are serious contemporary civil rights issues. Interestingly, the objectors included both students and teachers in Peru, Brazil and Mexico.

The many individuals, departments and universities in Latin America that are discussing harmful animal use or developing and implementing alternatives illustrate the groundswell of interest in enhancing the quality of life science education and training. The seminars helped bring together many of those in the region to share skills and experiences, and along with new contacts they provided the opportunity to build effective networks and to plan future collaboration with InterNICHE and its partner organisations. Press conferences and media interviews – including one held with supportive politicians in the Peruvian parliament itself – succeeded in further raising awareness of replacement alternatives through national-level TV and newspaper articles.

A significant amount of information on the current situation concerning animal use and alternatives was gathered from each country during the tour. InterNICHE and its partners will continue to follow and campaign on developments across the region – such as the "Arouca Law" (No. 11.794/08) in Brazil. Accepted in October 2008, this regulation of procedures on animals used in research, testing and education represents a retrograde step and legislative backlash to the campaigning successes in the country, including institutional and local bans on animal experimentation, the popularisation of alternatives, and empowered conscientious objection and legal challenges.

### 4 Follow-up and future plans

In order to continue the hands-on access to alternatives provided at the seminars, new Alternatives Loan Systems are being established in Mexico, Peru and Brazil. As well as facilitating access for teachers and students in the host country, they will provide a valuable resource for campaigners for further outreach to institutes and conferences nationally. Negotiations are also continuing with producers of frog and canine anatomy software for InterNICHE to create translated versions and to secure free or inexpensive distribution of the learning tools across Latin America. Translation of alternatives has been identified as an urgent requirement in many countries. A new film on alternatives in veterinary education and training is also being produced by InterNICHE, and widespread distribution of the translated versions will be achieved.

The donation of computers and alternatives to selected universities is also being planned in order to support the initiatives of progressive departments and to promote humane education through example. Further projects are being supported with grant funding from the InterNICHE 2008 Humane Education

Award (20,000 Euro) which was widely promoted on the tour. Discussions with key collaborators continue in each country to support and develop projects and to negotiate further curricular transformation. All participants from the seminars and meetings are being contacted and reminded of the InterNICHE resources that are available.

New contacts are also being sought and developed across the region, particularly in Chile and Colombia. Brazil and Mexico will each host an InterNICHE conference in 2009 that will bring together all who are working on curricular change. Progress across the whole region will be reviewed by Latin American speakers at these events and at the next global InterNICHE conference, which will be held in England.

## 5 Conclusion

The tour and series of seminars were considered a great success. They demonstrated the value of working inclusively with teachers, students and campaigners, and of using a solidarity and partnership approach in order to catalyse curricular change. Feedback suggested that existing initiatives had been strengthened and that a new momentum for change had been created. The many plans for immediate follow-up and for the future reflect the interest and opportunities now available in Latin America to progress humane education and to help create a new generation of better trained and humane life science professionals.

## References

- Jukes, N. and Chiuiua, M. (2003). *From Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse: Alternative Methods for a Progressive, Humane Education*, 2nd ed. Leicester, UK: InterNICHE.
- Maroueva, E. and Jukes N. (2008). Outreach, alternatives awareness and replacement in Russia. In Proceedings of the 6th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences. *AATEX 14 (Special Issue)*, 225-228.
- Martinsen, S. (2008). Training the Animal Doctor: Caring as a Clinical Skill. In Proceedings of the 6th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences. *AATEX 14 (Special Issue)*, 269-272.
- Perčić, M., Jukes, N. and Maroueva, E. (2008). Facilitating replacement through access to and training in alternatives. In Proceedings of the 6th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences. *AATEX 14 (Special Issue)*, 277-279.

## Acknowledgements and further information

The outreach was co-organised by the following individuals and organisations: The author of this paper, Nick Jukes from the International Network for Humane Education (InterNICHE); Maria Renee Selaya and Susana Carpio from Animales SOS (Bolivia); Corinne Schirmer from UPA (Peru); Luís Martini and Vera Cristofani from Educação Humanitária (Brazil); Martha Gutiérrez from ADDA and InterNICHE (Argentina); Lizbeth Muñoz López and Ana Sofía Ponce from InterNICHE (Mexico). The valuable contribution of many other volunteers from across Latin America is also acknowledged.

The project was made possible thanks to a grant from the Doerenkamp-Zbinden Foundation (CH), with further support provided by Animalfree Research (CH), Proefdiervrij (NL) and the International Association Against Painful Experiments on Animals (IAAPEA) (UK).

A longer version of this report can be found on the InterNICHE website [www.interniche.org](http://www.interniche.org) and on the Doerenkamp-Zbinden Foundation website [www.doerenkamp.ch](http://www.doerenkamp.ch).

## Correspondence to

Nick Jukes  
InterNICHE Co-ordinator  
98 Clarendon Park Road  
Leicester LE2 3AE  
England  
e-mail: [coordinator@interniche.org](mailto:coordinator@interniche.org)