

Advisory committee gives thumbs up to progress on alternative methods

By Ernie Hood

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Alternative Toxicological Methods gave an enthusiastic thumbs-up to the substantial [reinvention](#) launched last year by the groups it advises. The advisory committee met Sept. 16 at NIEHS to review work of the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods (ICCVAM), and the National Toxicology Program (NTP) Interagency Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Methods (see [sidebar](#)).

“It’s been just over a year since ICCVAM released its new vision and strategic direction, which outlined a new plan and a new direction for the 15-member U.S. committee,” said Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., NIEHS and NTP director. “You’re going to hear about some of the significant progress that has been made by the committee on a variety of fronts since the plan was adopted.”

Fit-for-purpose approach

Perhaps most importantly, the coordinating committee has adopted an approach to validation of alternative test methods known as a fit-for-purpose approach. The method focuses on the needs of individual agencies and industries that are best positioned to quickly adopt a specific alternative test method.

Warren Casey, Ph.D., director of the interagency center, explained that the coordinating committee has evolved into more of a service organization. “Fit-for-purpose validation is really getting the right product to the right person at the right time, or getting the agencies what they need when they need it — high-quality results in a very short amount of time,” he said.

Words have become deeds

Last year’s good intentions formed the basis of this year’s tangible accomplishments, making for action-oriented updates from the coordinating committee, the federal agencies that comprise the coordinating committee, the interagency center, and international alternative methods agencies, such as those in the European Union, Japan, Canada, and Korea. Several speakers noted that collaborations among agencies and other stakeholders have increased dramatically and substantial progress has been made toward acceptance of alternative methods.

As a key element of new vision and direction, the coordinating committee and interagency center increased engagement with the scientific community and stakeholders through focused workshops (see related [story](#)), webinars, and forums. Website upgrades have helped improve communication with stakeholders.

“We are very pleased with ICCVAM’s new direction and its much stronger focus on achieving real reductions in animal use,” said Patricia Bishop, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals representative, echoing the positive sentiments expressed by many of the advisory committee members.

(Ernie Hood is a contract writer with the NIEHS Office of Communications and Public Liaison)



“These collaborations are exactly the type of activity that was envisioned when the ICCVAM Authorization Act was passed 15 years ago, and they will ultimately bring success in implementing methods to reduce, refine, and replace animals in toxicity testing,” said Birnbaum. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



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“The level of collaboration we’re experiencing is unprecedented in the history of ICCVAM,” said Casey, “and most projects we’re trying to do within one year.” (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



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“ICCVAM has accomplished multiple positive results, helping reduce the number of animals [used] in the process of meeting regulatory requirements for product registration,” said outgoing advisory committee member Ricardo Ochoa, D.V.M., Ph.D., president of Pre-Clinical Safety Inc., reflecting on the progress made during his term. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



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Won Keun Seong, Ph.D., is director of the Korean Center for the Validation of Alternative Methods, an international partner of the coordinating committee. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



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“We think skin sensitization is one of the best areas we have for replacement of animal tests,” said Joanna Matheson, Ph.D., of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and member of the Skin Sensitization Working Group. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



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Advisory committee chair Daniel Wilson, Ph.D., of The Dow Chemical Company, summarized the sessions, indicating that ICCVAM has seen resounding success in the efforts it has championed in a remarkably short period of time. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)



A mild, late summer day was the perfect opportunity to collect the committee members and attendees outdoors for a group photo. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)

Finding alternatives to animal testing

The term [alternative methods](#)

(<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/science/sya-iccvam/index.cfm>)

refers to methods of research and testing that use fewer or no animals, or that reduce animal pain and distress. The National Toxicology Program (NTP) participates in three committees that ensure the involvement of all stakeholders in the advancement of alternative testing methods.

- The **Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods** or [ICCVAM](#)

(<http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/pubhealth/evalatm/iccvam/index.html>)

coordinates the activities of member federal agencies to replace, reduce, or refine animal use.

- The **NTP Interagency Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Methods** or [NICEATM](#)

(<http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/pubhealth/evalatm/index.html>)

supports ICCVAM activities and NTP high-throughput screening projects. The center conducts projects relevant to test method development, maintaining and promoting scientific quality and the protection of human and animal health and the environment.

- The **Scientific Advisory Committee on Alternative Toxicological Methods** or [SACATM](#)

(<http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/about/org/sacatm/index.html>)

advises NICEATM, ICCVAM, and the NIEHS and NTP director. Representatives are drawn from industries regulated by ICCVAM member agencies, animal welfare organizations, academia, test method developers, and regulatory agencies outside of the federal government.

World Congress strengthens international ties

By Catherine Sprankle

NICEATM and ICCVAM strengthened international ties Aug. 24-28 at the Ninth World [Congress](#)

(<http://www.wc9prague.org/>)

on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences in Prague.

- NICEATM staff helped organize a satellite [meeting](#)

(<http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/pubhealth/evalatm/3rs-meetings/past-meetings/hist-wksp-2014/index.html>)

, “Workshop on Alternatives to the HIST for Acellular Pertussis Vaccines: Progress and Challenges in the Replacement of HIST.”

- Casey co-chaired the Activity Updates From International Validation Centers session and summarized NICEATM and ICCVAM activities.

- NICEATM contractor Nicole Kleinstreuer, Ph.D., gave two presentations — one on an adverse outcome pathway for vascular development toxicity, and another on using high-throughput screening methods to identify endocrine disruptors.

- Raymond Tice, Ph.D., of NTP, co-chaired two sessions — Updates on Research Activities from the USA, and High-throughput Screening Models. He also presented updates on [Tox21](#)

(<http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/results/hts/index.html>)

activities.

- Abigail Jacobs, Ph.D., ICCVAM co-chair, with FDA, co-chaired the Topical Toxicity-Phototox session. She also gave a presentation on internationally harmonized nonanimal approaches to photosafety testing.

- Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Ph.D., with FDA, co-chaired and gave a presentation at the Tissues and Organs-on-a-Chip session. She also presented the regulatory perspective on adverse outcome pathways, and a process for international cooperation on regulatory science.

- Richard McFarland, Ph.D., with FDA, discussed reducing, refining, and replacing animal use in preclinical testing of cellular and gene therapies.

- Staff from NICEATM and the NTP Biomolecular Screening Branch prepared and presented eleven scientific posters.

(<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/>)

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