In cooperation with the Netherlands: Increasing acceptance of alternative test strategies to tests with animals

International workshop conducted by the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) and the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)

BfR Communication No 004/2017 of 13 April 2017

Tests with animals should be avoided wherever possible. This is a major objective of the German Centre for the Protection of Laboratory Animals (Bf3R), which is located at the BfR. Integrated test strategies are gaining more and more in significance for the reduction of animal testing. Various methods, such as mathematical and *in vitro* tools are combined here. There is currently no general procedure for validating integrated test strategies. The goal is to enable an effective process of validation in order to increase and speed up regulatory acceptance. An intensive scientific exchange and cooperation with partner institutions are of great importance here.

Topic of the joint workshop conducted by the BfR and the RIVM, the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, on 23 and 24 March 2017 in Berlin was the optimisation of the scientific validation of test strategies. The participants were made up of international experts from governments, regulatory authorities, universities and industry.

Up to now, the reliability and significance of individual toxicological test methods were evaluated in the course of validation. These processes are of particular importance within the scope of regulatory acceptance and implementation in legal frameworks for substances. As a single alternative test method can usually not substitute an *in vivo* test method, more and more mathematical and *in vitro* tools are being combined into integrated test strategies. There is currently no way of validating these innovative test strategies, however, to ensure that they comply with regulatory requirements so that regulatory acceptance is indeed guaranteed.

The objective of the workshop was to define a strategy which will enable a more effective process of validation and regulatory acceptance of alternative test strategies. Special emphasis was placed on how important the physiological relevance of the integrated test strategy is in the process of validation, which is why even closer cooperation with the medical field is recommended. The results of the workshop are soon to be published in a scientific journal.

The RIVM and BfR are cooperation partners in various scientific projects. The joint cooperation agreement aims in particular at scientific collaboration in the field of animal welfare. The German Centre for the Protection of Laboratory Animals (Bf3R) is to build up a scientific exchange with Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM).

The National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) is an independent research institution belonging to the Dutch health ministry. The Institute conducts its own research and advises the national government in matters of public health, consumer protection and environmental conservation.

About the BfR

The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) is a scientifically independent institution within the portfolio of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) in Germany. It advises the Federal Government and Federal Laender on questions of food, chemical and product safety. The BfR conducts its own research on topics that are closely linked to its assessment tasks.

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