

Third World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences

The Third World Congress held in Bologna, Italy from 29 August to 2 September, 1999 was an excellent meeting, well-organised, with a very comprehensive scientific program. It was attended by about 700 delegates, drawn from 39 countries. The host was the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM), part of the Joint Research Centre at Ispra in northern Italy, established by the European Commission. Its Director, Professor Michael Balls, was co-Chairman with Dr Andrew Rowan, Senior Vice-President of the Humane Society of the USA. Dr Rowan will co-chair the Fourth World Congress, to be held in Boston, USA in August, 2002.

Apart from the benefits of scientific and social interac-

tion at a large conference such as this, a very significant outcome was the adoption by delegates of the Declaration of Bologna, at a special session held in the University of Bologna on 31 August, 1999. The charter was later signed by conference delegates.

In summary, the Declaration stated that:

The participants in the Third World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences strongly endorse and reaffirm the principles put forward by Russell and Burch in 1959. Humane science is a prerequisite for good science, and is best achieved in relation to laboratory animal procedures by the vigorous promotion and application of the Three Rs. The Three Rs should serve as a unifying concept, a challenge, and an opportunity for reaping benefits of every kind – scientific, economic and humanitarian.

ANZCCART's motto is *humane science* and it strongly endorses these principles.

Australia and New Zealand were well represented among the delegates and featured prominently in the scientific program. This reflected our active involvement in the previous two World Congresses (in Baltimore and Utrecht) and in the preparation of the program for this Congress.

The Congress was held over four days, with a plenary session at the beginning and end of each day, interspersed with papers on five concurrent themes:

- A – the development of replacement alternative methods;
- B – the validation and regulatory acceptance of alternative test methods;
- C – reduction alternatives and application of the Three Rs to biologicals;
- D – the refinement of animal procedures; and
- E – education, ethics and databases.

In addition, there were 26 workshops, covering all of the above themes. Many of the workshops involved the point-counterpoint approach, using two speakers giving different points of view on the subject, with interaction from the audience and responses from the speakers.

A special feature of the Congress was the presence of Professor William Russell, co-author with Mr Rex Burch of *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique*. This year marked 40 years since its publication by UFAW in 1959. It was reprinted in 1992 and is available from ANZCCART's Adelaide office.

Much of the emphasis in the program was on toxicology and the validation and international harmonisation of alternatives to animal use, particularly in testing of pharmaceuticals and of vaccines. This reflects the large numbers of animals used in these areas, particularly in Europe and North America.

Two of ANZCCART's Australian Board members attended – the Chairman, Professor Mike Rickard and Professor David Mellor, as well as the Director, Dr Robert Baker. Two members of Council, Dr Peter Penson (Victoria) and Associate Professor Margaret Rose (NSW) also attended, as did Dr David Bayvel, a former member of the ANZCCART New Zealand Board. Professor Mellor is Vice-Chairman of the New Zealand Board.

Professor Mellor gave a plenary address on *Learning from refinement techniques applied at low and high levels of noxiousness*, which discussed the effects of experimental manipulations on animals in terms of the types of suffering

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