Comment

Progress in Promoting the Three Rs in Korea: Efficiency and Consistency

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Summary — The Korea National Information Center for the 3Rs was established in August 2011, to enhance humane science and animal welfare in Korea. It is a national Three Rs platform, with the goal of exchanging knowledge and sharing examples of best practice, in order to help replace laboratory animal use in education and training. This paper briefly summarises the progress made and the challenges that have become apparent during the initial operation of the collaborative project. There is a need to recognise and manage the challenges resulting from policy changes, especially misinterpretation of the objectives by the decision makers at the participating academic institutions and the government. The collective power of this type of collaborative project can be used to leverage an ongoing commitment to essentials such as consistent funding for operational and support staff, as well as allocation of the required space.

Key words: CITI-KOREA, education, KNIC3Rs, research ethics, Three Rs platform.

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Introduction

Scientists planning research that involves the use of animals are required by law to examine the possibilities for the implementation of Replacement, Reduction and/or Refinement (the Three Rs; 1) in these experiments. A number of information centres have emerged globally, such as the Animal Welfare Information Center (AWIC), the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing (CAAT), and the University of California Center for Animal Alternatives (UCCAA), to assist scientists and lay people in locating information on the Three Rs (2).

Since April 2008, we (the authors) have been acting as project coordinators and facilitators in the setting-up of the Institute for the 3Rs, at Konkuk University, Korea (3) and the Korea National Information Center for the 3Rs (4; hereafter referred to as KNIC3Rs). Our initial approach for this project was to develop a Three Rs platform website in Korea at the Konkuk University, to provide user-friendly 'alternative' teaching resources funded by the Alternatives Research & Development Foundation (ARDF), USA. This project was expanded to nationwide advocacy, in collaboration with the Catholic University of Korea, the Institute for the 3Rs at Konkuk University, and the Animal, Plant and Fisheries Quarantine and Inspection Agency under the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. This national Three Rs platform promotes the humane use of animals in education, training and research, as well as raising awareness of the moral and ethical issues that enhance animal welfare and sound science.

To facilitate the exchange of information resources on humane science and animal welfare at the global level, the KNIC3Rs had international link agreements with the Jeanne Marchig International Centre for Animal Welfare Education, at the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, University of Edinburgh, UK; the Animal Welfare Information Center, United States Department of Agriculture, USA; the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing, Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, USA; the Science Bank, Animalearn, USA; and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) International, UK (jointly referred to as “the Participants”).