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Björn Ekwall, 1940 – 2000

Dr. Björn Ekwall is acknowledged for his extraordinary contributions to alternative test method development and his dedication to the implementation of alternative tests for regulatory purposes. Results from his work in the area of *in vitro* cytotoxicity served as a major impetus for organization of the International Workshop on *In Vitro* Methods for Assessing Acute Toxicity.

Born in Uppsala in 1940, he attended Uppsala University Medical School and obtained his MD in 1969. After a short time as a General Practitioner, he became a lecturer at the Department of Anatomy, Uppsala University, where he earned his Ph.D. in toxicology. He was a postdoctoral fellow for 6 months at Materials Science Toxicology Laboratories, Memphis, TN, 1981-1982, and a Consultant at the Toxicology Laboratory of the Swedish Food Administration, 1982-1983. Between 1989 and 1996 he was an Associate Professor at the Division of Toxicology, Department of Pharmaceutical Biosciences, Uppsala University.

Dr. Ekwall introduced the concept of testing compounds in systems such as cell cultures and extrapolating the results to human toxicity. He felt that one could break down toxicity in complex biological systems to basic elements that could then be analyzed by using *in vitro* methods. To advance these ideas, he founded a small non-profit research institute, the Cytotoxicology Laboratory, Uppsala (CTLU) in 1983. He also established the Scandinavian Society for Cell Toxicology whose mission is to gather scientists for meetings and show that chemical effects on cells should translate to *in vivo* effects. These organizations coordinated a large international evaluation study, the Multicenter Evaluation of In Vitro Cytotoxicity Tests (MEIC), that began in 1989 to scrutinize the relevance of *in vitro* cytotoxicity tests for human acute toxicity of chemicals, and to select batteries of *in vitro* assays for practical testing of chemicals as alternatives to animal acute toxicity tests. Sixty-five different test methods were employed for testing 50 chemicals. Dr. Ekwall continued to work with the MEIC project until his untimely death on August 19, 2000.

Dr. Ekwall published 69 articles/book chapters on *in vitro* toxicology, plus 30 abstracts published in journals and another 30 abstracts published in conference proceedings. He received many international awards and was a member of many scientific societies and associations.

