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Establishment of the International Cooperation on Alternative Test Methods (ICATM) and Its Role in the Validation and Regulatory Acceptance of Globally Harmonized Safety Assessment Methods

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Several countries have established national validation organizations to promote the validation, evaluation, and regulatory acceptance of alternative safety testing methods that may reduce, refine, and replace the use of animals while maintaining adequate protection of human and animal health and the environment. On April 27, 2009, Canada, the European Union, Japan, and the U.S. signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on International Cooperation on Alternative Test Methods (ICATM) to promote enhanced cooperation, collaboration, and communication among their respective validation organizations. The initial participating validation organizations are the Environmental Health Science and Research Bureau within Health Canada, ECVAM, JaCVAM, and ICCVAM-NICEATM. The organizations developed an initial framework to promote harmonization of scientific recommendations on alternative toxicity testing methods in response to a charge from the International Cooperation on Cosmetics Regulation. The ICATM MOC implements this framework and lays out processes for cooperation across three critical areas: design and conduct of validation studies, independent scientific peer review, and development of harmonized test method recommendations for regulatory consideration. This agreement is providing greater efficiency and effectiveness for the participating validation organizations by avoiding duplication of effort and leveraging of resources for recently initiated international validation studies. The increased cooperation and collaboration is expected to support more rapid international adoption of scientifically valid test methods by organizations such as the OECD that will protect people, animals, and the environment while reducing, refining, and replacing animal use where scientifically feasible.

Key Words: ICATM, harmonized recommendations, international cooperation

Categories: Regulation/Policy (first choice); Risk Assessment (second choice)