



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF
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JAN 04 2010

Rear Admiral William S. Stokes
Director, National Toxicology Program Interagency
Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Toxicological Methods
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
P.O. Box 12233, Mail Code K2-16
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Dear Rear Admiral Stokes:

I am replying to Dr. Birnbaum's letter dated September 18, 2009, requesting the Department of Defense's review of the suitability of 1) the updated test method protocol for the reduced murine local lymph node assay and 2) the updated test method performance standards for the local lymph node. The Department agrees with the recommendations by the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods (ICCVAM) that the updated test method, when conducted in accordance with the updated test method performance standards, is suitable to distinguish between skin sensitizers and non-sensitizers for testing situations that do not require dose-response information (as described in NIH Publication No. 09-6439 and 09-7357). The Department also agrees that this method will be useful to reduce the number of animals used to evaluate chemicals for skin sensitization.

The Department will use a variety of mechanisms to educate and encourage the use of the revised test method and corresponding standards for Department-sponsored research. Informing Department scientists and veterinarians will be accomplished through activities such as newsletters and training sessions for both Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) members and laboratory personnel. Extramural scientists supporting Department research will be informed of these alternative test methods through their interactions with Department personnel and IACUCs. The Department of Defense takes very seriously our responsibility to develop and encourage methods that replace, reduce, and refine the use of animals in research.

I appreciate your leadership role in the federal government's effort to identify and validate alternatives to using animals in research. The ICCVAM has been instrumental in facilitating federal-wide endorsement of alternatives to animal use.

Sincerely,

/s/

Robert E. Foster, PhD
Director, Biosystems