

Carta de Abertura

Dear Colleagues,

We are honored to write this letter opening the COLAMA 2012 abstract book. COLAMA 2012 was the first Latin-American Congress on Alternatives to Animal Testing in Education, Research and Industry. And, we hope, the first one of many more to come. Furthermore, this event could not be possible without your help, assistance and attendance. This event was inspired and implemented to encourage and advance Latin-American science to the next step: to develop and use alternatives to animal testing!

Firstly, COLAMA2012 acknowledges the funding, assistance and collaboration of important governmental institutions supporting alternatives. In 2012, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation created the first constitutional project specifically for Alternatives: The National Network for Alternative Methods (Rede Nacional de Métodos Alternativos - RENAMA). In the same year, RENAMA successfully supported eight Brazilian research groups to implement international validated methods. The Post-Graduate Program in Science and Biotechnology from the Fluminense Federal University (PPBI/UFF) gave total support to the congress, showing its academic interest in developing this field, as well as the importance of encouraging students to develop and apply alternative methods. The BraCVAM (Brazilian Center for Validation of Alternative Methods), supported from the National Institute for Quality Control in Health (INCQS/Fiocruz), also strongly contributed with COLAMA organization. Together the COLAMA2012 also had the honor of sharing its space and schedule with the II Latin-American Conference of Humane Education and Alternatives, following its first edition, which took place in Lima, Peru, 2012, through a cooperation with the International Network for Humane Education (InterNICHE).

Historically, COLAMA2012 came 19 years after the 1st World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences, held in Baltimore, MD, USA. In this time, many activities on alternatives have been developed around the world, including Latin American countries. Currently, we have in Latin America a compelling opportunity to discuss and plan our activities and work in collaboration with other countries, in our continent or around the world. For this synchronization, COLAMA will happen every year after the World Congress, or every three years. Therefore, the COLAMA2015 (second edition) will assemble in CUBA and we are expecting to meet you all again, gathering our efforts for Alternative Methods!

In November 2012, many organizational activities occurred during the congress. The Brazilian Society for Alternative Methods (SBMAIt) was constituted and researchers from several Latin American countries collaborated and organized the Hispanic-Latin-American Network for Alternative Methods, eventually constituted in the 10th Latin American Congress on Pharmacology (LATINFARMA 2013) in Havana, Cuba. All these activities further validate the galvanizing environment in Latin America for alternative methods, and the dynamic collaboration necessary to shape the scientific paradigm.

The COLAMA2012 organization is very grateful for your participation. And the COLAMA2012 effort could only be made with the support from the scientific commission, organizing commission, speakers, governmental support from agencies such as the Research Support Foundation of the State of Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ), Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education (CAPES) or the Institute for Metrology, Standardization and Industrial Quality (INMETRO) and National Institute for Quality Control in Health (INCQS), as well as supporting companies and organizations such as Grupo Boticário (Brazil), L'Oreal Research & Innovation (France), LUSH Cosmetic (England), Humane Society International (USA), Cruelty Free-International (England), Institute for *in Vitro* Science (USA), International Network for Humane Education (England). The total budget for COLAMA was around 200,000 BRLs (about \$80,000 USD). This budget was completely employed on the structure, divulgation and speaker support for the event.

The congress had 47 speakers contributing and 226 attendees, in four different themes

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in alternatives: (1) Ethical, political and legislative considerations about animal use in the science and industry; (2) Alternative methods for education and training - Humane Education (in cooperation with the II Latin American Conference on Humane Education and Alternatives); (3) Animal welfare and refinement for a high quality science; (4) Reduction and replacement of animal use in the science and industry.

As special activities, we can point the impressive opening lecture by Dr. Chantra Eskes (SeCAM) titled "Validation and Acceptance of Alternative Methods: Past, Present & Future". And the Alternatives to Animal Uses in the Education demonstration, part of the Latin American Conference on Humane Education and Alternatives, organized by InterNICHE.

Three short-courses increased the activities of our congress, contributing with specific knowledge for their attendances. The courses were entitled: (1) Alternative methods in pre-clinical toxicology: tendencies and legislations; (2) Using chemically preserved corpses by Modified Larssen Solution as a method for surgical technique training and (3) *In silico* methods for toxicity prediction of pharmacokinetic parameters.

In the congress attendance we counted 9 Brazilian companies, 11 international companies and institutes (from Cuba, France, USA, Monaco, Germany, England, and others) and 26 institutes of education.

COLAMA organization was able to grant 5 award prizes during the event.. Four of them were granted by Grupo Boticário, selecting 4 poster presenter for a visit in the company laboratories, and one by PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) covering the travel and the congress participation costs to an international young researcher.

For all this success of our first edition of this initiative in the name of all organizers, RENAMA, BraCVAM and PPBI/UFF are really grateful for your support and your attendance. We are looking forward to meeting you again in the next editions of this fantastic moment for alternatives, science and animal ethics and welfare.

Thank you!