

2015 Lush Training Prize Winner: PETA International Science Consortium Ltd., UK

1. Could you describe who you are and what you do?

I'm the Associate Director of the PETA International Science Consortium. The Consortium was established in 2012 to promote the development and use of human-relevant animal-free research methods. The Consortium champions the best animal-free methods, and brings scientific expertise and extensive knowledge of the international regulatory environment to the development of testing methods. Our work involves the development, validation, global implementation and harmonisation of alternatives to testing on animals (for more information, see www.piscltd.org.uk).



2. Why did you win the Prize?

The PETA International Science Consortium won the training prize for its broad approach to education and training, which includes hosting workshops and webinars, initiating in-person training sessions, and developing educational resources to promote the implementation and acceptance of non-animal methods. For example, we teamed up with the online news service *Chemical Watch* and leading experts, to develop a free seven-part webinar series providing information on how to use non-animal methods.

3. What difference has winning the Prize made to your contribution to the goal of *Replacement*?

We are delighted that we have more resources to help reach our goal of replacing tests on animals. The Lush Prize has helped us to support academic researchers and biotech companies working on alternatives to the use of animals in science and medicine, to work side-by-side with governments and regulatory agencies to implement legislative changes that see the acceptance of more-advanced and humane non-animal tests, and to continue our work in education and training regarding the promotion of non-animal methods.

The Lush Prize has been instrumental in contributing to our goals to replace tests on animals. Thanks to the funds from the prize, the Consortium has been unwavering in its efforts to promote non-animal methods — commenting on testing proposals submitted by companies for REACH and suggesting ways to avoid tests on animals, reviewing guidance and documentation, participating in stakeholder meetings, working with companies and regulators to replace tests on animals, publishing scientific papers and promoting non-animal methods at every opportunity. The Consortium is currently focusing on reducing and replacing acute systemic toxicity testing through multiple efforts, including hosting a series of six webinars focused on alternative approaches to acute inhalation toxicity.

4. What key points do you believe people should be made aware of regarding the issue of animal testing?

The most significant trend in recent years has been the recognition that animals are not good 'models' for the human body. Studies have shown that experiments on animals often waste both human and animal lives, and squander precious resources by trying to induce, in animals, diseases that they would never normally contract, or by trying to replicate human responses to chemicals in animals who are biologically, physiologically and biochemically different to people. Fortunately, a wealth of cutting-edge, non-animal research methodologies promises a brighter future for animals and human health. It is essential that people are made aware of this, as well as of the suffering endured by animals used in experiments.

5. Do you feel that progress is being made in ending animal use in research?

A revolution in toxicity testing is currently taking place, in no small part as a result of decades of work by PETA US and its affiliates, and more recently by the PETA International Science Consortium Ltd. Scientists are now taking advantage of the sea-change that has occurred in the last quarter-century in our understanding of how biological processes work. This has allowed for the development of testing methods that can look directly at cellular mechanisms rather than at the crude 'black box' results that come from the use of animals.

Today — because experiments on animals are cruel, time-consuming, expensive and often inapplicable to humans — the world's most forward-thinking scientists are developing and using methods that replace animals and are relevant to human health. The interest in this area is evident in the increasing number of companies focused solely on animal-free testing tools (e.g. www.piscLtd.org.uk/links-resources/), and the increasing number of scientific organisations/societies dedicated to alternatives to animal testing.

However, there continues to be a need for scientists, regulatory authorities and funding institutes to embrace and invest in these new technologies. Greater international harmonisation efforts are also needed, with government agencies facilitating the international use and regulatory acceptance of non-animal methods that have been accepted in one geographical region. The Consortium's work on international harmonisation includes providing training resources to regulators to support them in keeping abreast of the latest non-animal methods.

As more people become aware of the exciting, progressive and effective science that makes use of non-animal methods, the number of those who object to animal experiments will undoubtedly continue to rise. According to a 2016 IPSOS Mori poll, support for an outright ban on animal experimentation is at a 14-year high. There are clearly both scientific and ethical reasons for ending animal use.

*Address for correspondence: Gilly Stoddart (PETA International Science Consortium Ltd.)
E-mail: GillyS@piscLtd.org.uk*