

Introduction: The Björn Ekwall Memorial Award 2015

Professor Michael Balls, from the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom, is the recipient of the Björn Ekwall Memorial Award for the year 2015, in recognition of his pioneering work in promoting animal welfare and alternatives to animal testing. Professor Balls has significantly contributed to the field of *in vitro* toxicology by promoting the use of non-animal tests to replace and reduce animal experiments.

Michael Balls (born in 1938, in Norwich, Norfolk, UK) studied zoology at Oxford University, where he graduated in 1960, and obtained his DPhil in 1964. After post-doctoral research at the University of California, Berkeley, CA, USA, and Reed College, Portland, OR, USA, he was a Lecturer in the School of Biological Sciences at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK. In 1975, he moved to the University of Nottingham Medical School, Nottingham, UK, as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Human Morphology. In 1985, he became Reader in Medical Cell Biology, and in 1990 he was promoted to Professor of Medical Cell Biology. Since 1995, he has been an Emeritus Professor of the University of Nottingham.

In 1979, Michael Balls became a Trustee of the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME), and in 1981 he became Chairman of the Trustees and moved the charity from London to Nottingham. Under his leadership, FRAME became one of the most important organisations in the world for the promotion of animal welfare and the implementation of alternatives to animal experimentation. In 1984, FRAME received the first ever grant from the UK Government for work on replacement alternatives.

In 1983, Michael Balls became Editor of the peer-review scientific journal, *Alternatives to Laboratory Animals (ATLA)*. Under his leadership for more than three decades, this journal has been publishing articles on alternatives to animal experimentation, and continues to play an important role in the implementation of *in vitro* testing methodologies and scientific achievements in this field.

Michael Balls collaborated with Björn Ekwall over many years, and became a close friend of Björn and his wife, Barbro. All the main reports concerning the results of the *Multicentre Evaluation of In Vitro Cytotoxicity (MEIC)* project (1989–1999), initiated and guided by Björn Ekwall, were published in *ATLA*.

In 1993, Michael Balls became the first Head of the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM). He retired from this position in 2002.

He is a member of, or an expert consultant to, several national and international boards and advisory committees involved in the protection of animals and in the development and validation of *in vitro* tests. Michael Balls was elected as Honorary Member of the Scandinavian Society for Cell Toxicology (SSCT) in 1994.

He has received many international awards for his work on laboratory animal welfare and alternatives to animal testing — for example, the Russell and Burch Award, the Marchig Animal Welfare Award, the Michael Kay Award, and the SmithKline Beecham Laboratory Animal Welfare Prize. In 2002, he was appointed a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Professor Balls has a long list of publications, including over 375 articles in peer-review journals. In 2009, he published a book entitled *The Three Rs and the Humanity Criterion*, which is an abridged version of *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique* by W.M.S. Russell and R.L. Burch (1959).

Ada Kolman (President) and Hanna Tähti (Secretary)

On behalf of the Board of the Björn Ekwall Memorial Foundation

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