

Investing in humane education: Provision of alternatives across India

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Abstract

InterNICHE has worked with Indian teachers, students, campaigners and others since 2002, during which time a range of national and local projects have been initiated and supported. These have included outreach visits and seminars, demonstrations and training in alternatives, replacement-based grant projects, the establishment of a national alternatives library, and work at the level of government and academic councils. Within these, distribution of alternatives has played an important role, both to familiarise end users and other stakeholders with alternatives and to achieve replacement in specific practical classes. By funding the development of new software and negotiating with producers, InterNICHE has been able to offer many alternatives for free or at cost. Recent distribution includes at the 2009 national zoology alternatives seminar; the 2010 national conference of the CPCSEA, the government agency for animal experimentation; the Dissection Committee of the UGC, who help define the curriculum for university zoology departments; and the 2010 national animal protection network conference. Often an alternatives pack, featuring a collation of software from across the disciplines, has been distributed. Software specific to one discipline has also been sent directly to teachers; the Indian Journal of Pharmacology disseminated 4000 copies of pharmacology freeware. By mid-2011, with support from the Marchig Animal Welfare Trust, InterNICHE had distributed products whose normal purchase value exceeds US\$500,000. With the UGC abandoning the requirement for dissection in zoology studies from 2011 onwards, a major new project is helping to provide alternatives to the estimated 17 million animals used annually in this field.

Introduction

InterNICHE has been active in India since 2002, working in partnership with teachers, students, campaigners and others. A range of national and local projects have been initiated and supported by InterNICHE. These have included outreach visits and seminars, demonstrations and training in alternatives, replacement-based grant projects, the establishment of a national alternatives library, and work at the level of government and academic councils. The distribution of alternatives is often linked to these projects but has played an increasingly important role in itself.

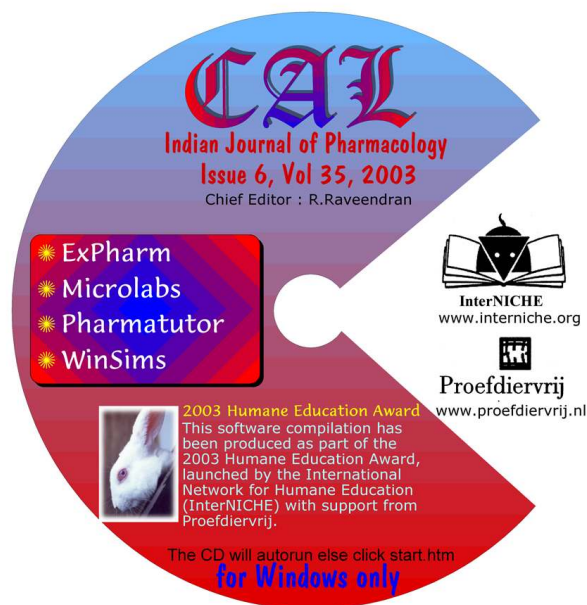
National distribution

The distribution of alternatives through the channels of academic publications and other networks has provided resources to teachers who can achieve direct replacement in specific practical classes. In 2003-2004 the Indian Journal of Pharmacology sent direct to teachers over 4000 copies of pharmacology freeware that InterNICHE had funded. Distribution at events has also provided end-users and other stakeholders with alternatives. By funding the development of new software and by negotiating with producers, InterNICHE has been able to offer many alternatives for free or at cost.

Examples of recent events with widespread distribution have included:

- National zoology alternatives seminar, co-organised by InterNICHE (Jaipur, 2009)
- National Conference of the CPCSEA, the government agency addressing animal experimentation, with InterNICHE exhibition and oral presentation (New Delhi, 2010)
- The Dissection Committee of the UGC, who help define the curriculum for university zoology departments, with InterNICHE as expert advisers (New Delhi, 2010)
- The Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organisations (FIAPO) conference (Chennai, 2011)

At some events an alternatives pack, featuring a collation of software from across the disciplines, has been distributed.



Freeware CAL Pharmacology Compilation CD: First alternatives software widely distributed by InterNICHE across India

Results and discussion

By mid-2011, with support from the Marchig Animal Welfare Trust, InterNICHE had distributed products whose normal purchase value exceeds US\$500,000. With the UGC abandoning the requirement for dissection in zoology studies from 2011 onwards, a major new project is being undertaken by InterNICHE with partners across the country to help provide alternatives to the estimated 17 million animals used annually in this field.

Conclusion

Free distribution of alternatives has familiarised teachers, the CPCSEA, UGC and other stakeholders with humane learning tools, and has helped achieve widespread implementation of these replacement alternatives across the country. Anecdotal evidence suggests many thousands of animal experiments have been replaced annually. A focus on facilitating replacement in zoology practical classes will now multiply this achievement many times over.

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