

Origins of the Society of Toxicology of Canada

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The concept of toxicology as a discipline, distinct from pharmacology, arose as a consequence of the thalidomide-related disaster of the early 1960's. The consensus among a number of research scientists in Montreal-based pharmaceutical companies was that insufficient attention was being focussed on adverse health effects in animal studies. The founding meeting of the Society, attended by 15 interested scientists, was held on March 3, 1965 in the conference room of the Ayerst, McKenna and Harrison Ltd. Research Laboratories. The societal name, the Canadian Association for Research on Drug Safety (CARDS), was chosen. The initial discussions centred on the organization of a symposium "*Preclinical Toxicity Requirements*".

The aims of the Society were developed in the firm belief that the group should not become involved in the endless arguments about government regulations, but should spend its effort being informative, calling on qualified scientists from industry, government as well as basic and clinical scientists from academia to participate. The association was not to be considered as a pressure group for industry, but should be concerned with the scientific problems of toxicology in general. These remain the aims of the present day Society of Toxicology of Canada.

In the intervening years, the association has changed its name twice, first to the Canadian Association for Research in Toxicology (CART), and then in 1979 to the present day Society of Toxicology of Canada (STC). The first formal, annual symposium was held in 1967, entitled "*Perinatal Pharmacology and Toxicology*". The annual symposia have remained the main feature of the annual STC meeting usually held in early December. The purposes/aims of STC have not wavered from those of the early association over the 39 years from inception. The membership has climbed steadily from the original 15 to over 300 members, representing industry, government and academia. In addition to hosting the annual symposia on timely topics, STC has played an advocacy role with the preparation of papers on such subjects as the LD50 in toxicity evaluation, status of toxicology in Canada, training programs in toxicology, guidelines for the toxicologist, and a slide program for use in educating the public about toxicology.

Although human toxicology in Canada has become a distinct discipline from pharmacology in industry and government, the two disciplines continue to be intertwined in academia. The majority of toxicology training programs in Canada currently exist within departments of pharmacology and toxicology or schools of veterinary medicine, but there are some notable exceptions. Visiting the STC web site or the web sites of the major universities in Canada can give access to training programs in toxicology. The STC web page (<http://www.stcweb.ca>) contains information on the activities of the Society with links to Society documents, training programs and other societies of toxicology.