Effective User Support Documentation for a Toxicological Data Resource: ICE as a Case Study

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Access to high-quality in vivo, in vitro, and in silico data is essential to development and validation of new approaches for chemical safety testing. Sources of such data must address user requirements for accessibility, content, and usability. High-quality user documentation supports all three of these requirements, which are concordant with FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) data principles. Improvement of user documentation is a key focus of each release of the National Toxicology Program Interagency Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Toxicological Methods (NICEATM) Integrated Chemical Environment (ICE). Since its launch in 2017, ICE has been continually expanded and improved in response to stakeholder feedback. Help resources provided by ICE include tooltips to explain features and terminology, dialogs that explain inputs and outputs in greater detail, metadata that provide context for download data, webpages within the ICE site that provide explanations of data sets and tools, and downloadable user guides for every ICE tool. During every ICE update, documentation is reviewed and improved using a process that leverages the expertise of subject matter experts and technical communicators to ensure accuracy and continuous improvement. This process has resulted in ICE having a body of user support documentation that has been recognized for its utility and quality by both stakeholders and an independent review of technical communications professionals. The presentation will describe the ICE user help resources and improvement process in detail, offering ICE as a case study in how effective documentation can be provided for a toxicological data resource. This project was funded with federal funds from the NIEHS, NIH under Contract No. HHSN273201500010C.