

Editorial

REGISTRY NUMBERS OF CHEMICAL COMPOUNDS

In January 1983 *Biochemistry* initiated a new feature to increase the information content of the papers being published: inclusion of Chemical Abstracts Service Registry Numbers. A Registry Number is a unique, computer-assigned identification of a chemical substance.

When Registry Numbers were first introduced, in 1965, in *Chemical-Biological Activities* and later in *Chemical Abstracts*, their information value and usefulness were still untested. After 18 years, their wide acceptance has decisively substantiated and validated these points. Registry Numbers are the links that tie together the widely diverse and often disparate names that are used in the scientific literature for the same substance and associate these names with structural information and source documents. (For example, ADP has 12 synonyms, choline 6, choline citrate 15, and L-ascorbic acid 76!) Each compound indexed in *Chemical Abstracts* is assigned a Registry Number; these Numbers are also published in US Pharmacopeia, Merck Index, and many other data bases and information services used by the scientific community.

The National Cancer Institute, Environmental Protection Agency, National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, and European Community's Environmental Chemicals Data and Information Network all use CAS Registry Numbers for substance identification, as do a large number of private industrial information systems.

In *Biochemistry*, every compound indexed by *Chemical Abstracts* is assigned a Registry Number. Therefore, the incorporation of Registry Numbers in each paper serves two functions: (1) identifying that substance with that paper in annual and collective indexes and electronic data bases and (2) serving the scientific community as a link for that substance to all previous and future citations of the same substance.

The inclusion of Registry Numbers in *Biochemistry* is possible because all of the American Chemical Society primary journals enter the primary and secondary publication cycles simultaneously. As galley proofs are being prepared, a document analyst is assigning index entries and the computer is providing a correlation function. These operations are generally completed in sufficient time to incorporate Registry Numbers in the page cycle. If the analysis and computer support provided by the staff at Chemical Abstracts Service are not complete by the time pages are prepared, the papers involved are nevertheless published without additional delay. In this case the Registry Number, while not appearing in the printed journal, will still be incorporated into the digitized data base. In no instance are papers delayed in order to obtain this additional information.