

David Wilcox, RIFM

David Wilcox has been named the new president of the Research Institute for Fragrance Materials, Inc. (RIFM; Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey). He previously served as vice president, product safety, regulatory and quality at Colgate-Palmolive. He succeeds Ladd Smith, PhD, who retired at the end of May.

Of the announcement, Sean Traynor, chairman of RIFM's board of directors, said, "Wilcox's experience has required him to communicate complex scientific and regulatory information to business partners in a clear manner, gaining alignment with both internal and external stakeholders, enabling the development of science-based strategic plans to address safety/regulatory issues. These qualities will aid him in building on the legacy of his predecessor, Ladd Smith. We are grateful to him for his 14 years of service to the industry. RIFM has experienced significant evolution during his tenure."

Recently, *P&F* magazine asked Wilcox about his professional experience, his goals and the job ahead.

P&F: Can you please tell us a bit about your background?

Wilcox: I received my doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh. My academic career included a National Cancer Institute Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Wistar Institute followed by faculty positions at Harvard Medical School and the University of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine. Leaving academia, I joined The Procter & Gamble (P&G) Co. as a research toxicologist. From P&G, I joined Colgate-Palmolive where I eventually led the safety, regulatory and quality groups.

P&F: How do you believe your experience will inform the work you do at RIFM?

Wilcox: RIFM is a research institute that has a long history of dedication to scientific excellence. An important part of that history is RIFM's interactions with an independent panel of experts to help guide the program. I expect to draw on both my academic and private sector experience to continue that tradition. My experience working with various groups, including those from both academic and regulatory communities around the world, will be a significant help as I join the RIFM team.

P&F: Coming from the consumer products world, what do you feel are the top regulatory/safety/science challenges facing the fragrance industry and the customers it serves?

Wilcox: There are regulatory challenges coming from several fronts for greater transparency and more restrictive chemical management in the United States, Europe and China. One of the great challenges will be the impending restrictions on animal testing. RIFM has been preparing for the past several years to meet that challenge. Each of RIFM's scientific disciplines—human health, environmental and respiratory—has shown outstanding innovation in developing alternative methods for assessing the safe use of fragrance ingredients. The science to support the safety and regulatory needs of the fragrance industry is often very complex and science is never static. The fragrance industry has a long history of proactive, responsible substantiation of safety and self-regulation. Maintaining a high level of scientific excellence and successfully communicating to multiple stakeholders will always provide opportunities for continuous improvement.

P&F: Science has been the fragrance industry's key asset in defending the safety of its ingredients and products. What is RIFM's role in this, and how does this asset then get communicated to NGOs, legislators, the public, etc.?

Wilcox: RIFM's Vision is to be the international scientific authority for the safe use of fragrance materials. RIFM accomplishes this by a rigorous scientific program that gathers and evaluates, with the guidance of an independent Expert Panel, data on fragrance materials to substantiate their safety. RIFM disseminates this information through publication in the scientific literature, presentations to other scientific bodies around the world, informational bulletins to our members, webinars, etc. In addition, the International Fragrance Association (IFRA) has a long, successful history of being the primary conduit to communicate this type of information to regulatory bodies and other interested parties.

P&F: Are there other industries from which RIFM can draw valuable lessons?

Wilcox: One can always learn something new in science from many different sources. A key role of the RIFM staff is to stay informed about new learning, methodologies and approaches to enable us to build upon and improve our existing capabilities.

P&F: What are some of your key goals in the short term?

Wilcox: Ensure a smooth transition; build a successful working relationship with the Expert Panel; ensure the continued professional growth of the RIFM staff; and stay focused on our role in ensuring the safety of fragrance materials.

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