Welcome to Vienna!

EAACI 2006 · 10–14 June

Current trends of pollen change
and more ...

EAACI – expertise in allergy
When you are holding this issue in your hand we are very close to the EAACI 2006 Congress in Vienna. The organising and scientific committees and the project team have been working hard for the last year in order to make our annual meeting a success, and it looks very promising! The number of abstract submissions is higher than ever and a record attendance is expected. More importantly, we will find an outstanding scientific programme and a scenic environment to meet as friends and discuss the latest developments in the field. I am convinced that EAACI 2006 will meet all our expectations and become another unforgettable EAACI event!

In preparation of the General Assembly in Vienna, our president Tony Frew provides you with some insights into his and the ExCom’s understanding, how the EAACI should develop within the next years. The structure of the EAACI will be reorganised to allow more people in an active participation of our Academy. All those with voting rights should be present to share the debate on an issue of great importance for EAACI, apart from other hot topics to be discussed there. I do encourage you to play an active role in our Academy, and this is the place and time to be!

In this issue of the EAACI Newsletter, you will also read more about ExCom members and the new President of the AAAAI, Thomas Platts-Mills, followed by the status reports from the EAACI sections and interest groups. If you missed the recent Ga²len and EAACI meetings in Eastern Europe, you can read the reports on them here. However, make sure you don’t miss the announcements of some key meetings in 2006 and 2007!

I do hope you share with me my enthusiasm about the invited state-of-the-art reports. I would like to continue publishing these very informative contributions to give you interesting news about exciting developments in our field in short. During the EAACI Congress in Vienna, we will certainly find some new hot topics to be included in future issues. The EAACI Newsletter intends not to only keep you updated about events and developments in our Academy, but also about scientific achievements and their translation in the clinical practice in all the facets of our specialty.

There is much to learn and enjoy. Let’s meet in Vienna to learn and enjoy together.

Claus Bachert
Editor
We have made an excellent start to 2006. We held our fourth winter school in February, in Grainau. This has become something of an EAACI institution, and as ever the Immunology section put on an excellent meeting for us. A meeting on mouse models of asthma was organised in Antalya, Turkey, and proved very successful as well.

**Within the ExCom we have also made good progress.** We met recently in Vienna, to put the finishing touches to some of the plans for the new internal structure of EAACI. The main aims of these changes are to focus activity around our key objectives, and to involve more people in the active management of our Academy. We will also give defined tasks to each of the executive committee members, and facilitate their ability to contribute to the effective development of our organisation. The details of the proposals have been circulated to all paid-up members and will be debated at the General Assembly in Vienna in June.

We are delighted to report that we have reached agreement on a plan to reduce membership fees for members from less advantaged parts of Europe. This has been a key objective of my presidency and I am delighted that we have been able to find a formula that will allow existing members to reduce their outgoings, as well as hopefully encouraging more new members from all over Europe. We also hope that this reduction will encourage our many junior members from Eastern Europe to become full members when they reach the age threshold! Further work in this area over the next year will involve looking at the financial structures of our congresses to see whether we can rebalance the benefits we offer to speakers and invited guests, with the legitimate desire of ordinary participants to attend our meeting at reasonable cost.

**Naturally the highlight of our year will be our annual congress.** At the close of abstract submissions in February, we had over 1600 abstracts, which is a record level of interest in the congress, and incidentally about 30% more abstracts than at the AAAAI meeting in Miami. We expect that this record number of abstracts will be reflected in a record attendance at the Vienna congress. A full range of scientific and social events awaits us there. I look forward to meeting you in Vienna, and as ever, if you have any issues that you wish to discuss with the EAACI leadership, you are welcome to contact me or the secretary-general to get these onto our agenda.

Anthony Frew
Welcome to **EAACI 2006** in Vienna!

**XXV Congress of the European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology, 10–14 June 2006, Vienna, Austria**

*Basic Science in Allergology and Clinical Immunology, a Prerequisite for Improving Patient Care and 100 Years of ALLERGY, as defined by Clemens von Pirquet.*

The EAACI Congress 2006 takes place in Vienna, a city known for its historical and cultural attractions. Vienna was the capital of the “Holy Roman Empire” and the Habsburgian Monarchy for centuries and is still a centre for music and fine arts today.

The EAACI is the major meeting of allergy and asthma in Europe. On the 100th anniversary of the Austrian paediatrician, Clemens von Pirquet defining the term ALLERGY, the EAACI and The Local Organizing Committee has planned a scientific programme of the highest standards covering all aspects of Allergology and Clinical Immunology. Better patient care originates from basic research, thus the theme of the Congress is “Basic Science in Allergology and Clinical Immunology, a Prerequisite for Improving Patient Care.”

The Scientific Programme includes topics such as The Evolution of Allergy; Cells of the Allergic Immune Response - from Dendritic Cells to regulatory T cells; Different Target Organs of a Systemic Disease - the Nose, Lung, Skin and Gut; and New Horizons in Diagnosis and Treatment - Recombinant Allergens. More than 1600 abstracts were submitted for the Congress.

For the first time, the 10 kilometre EAACI Allergy Run will take place on Saturday morning, 10th of June in the Prater Hauptallee, a street bordered by trees and more than 250 attractions, including Vienna’s famous Ferris wheel.

Various interesting tours and events are included in the social programmes, and attendees and guests will be able to spend memorable days discovering the rich past and present of Vienna and its surroundings, museums, operas, concert halls, castles, traditional inns, coffee houses, and small wineries. Come enjoy the music and excitement of Vienna!

*Rudolf Valenta*

*Professor, Medical University of Vienna*  
*President of the Local Organising Committee*
Top Sights in Vienna

Listed below are some interesting sights you should not miss when visiting Vienna.

- Hofburg - Imperial Residence and Palace of Arts: the imperial apartments with the Sisi museum, the Treasuries, the Spanish Riding School, the Austrian National Library, the Hofburg Chapel where the Vienna Boys' Choir perform.
- Albertina museum: with its collection of graphic arts, including the famous Dürer’s “Hare”.
- Museum of Fine Arts: one of the most important collections in the world with masterpieces by Rubens, Rembrandt, Titian, etc. and a great collection of Bruegel's paintings.
- Vienna’s Ringstrasse: a beautiful Boulevard for sightseeing with the best views of the Vienna State Opera, the Museum of Fine Arts and Natural History, the Parliament, City Hall and National Theatre, Votiv Church, and Stock Exchange.
- The Museum Quarter: the former imperial stables are now one of the biggest centres of culture worldwide with the Leopold Museum, Museum of Modern Art, Kunsthalle, Zoom Children’s Museum, Architekturzentrum, which brings art together with diverse cafés and restaurants, bars, and young designer shops.
- St. Stephen’s Cathedral: the gothic building is a Vienna landmark.
- Shops and boutiques in Vienna’s first district e.g. Kärntnerstrasse, Graben, Kohlmarkt.
- Schönbrunn Palace: the summer residence of the imperial family with its delightful park, the Gloriette, and the oldest zoo in the world.

Mozart Sites in Vienna

There are more than 20 sites in Vienna that claim to have been honoured by Mozart’s living presence “in these rooms”, “in this palace” or “in this church”. The one obvious exception is St. Marx cemetery, where he is buried. While still a child Mozart was already mingling with the social elite. In 1762, when Mozart was just six years old, the “prodigy from Salzburg” was already the talk of the town, and a performance for the Habsburgs was arranged at Schönbrunn Palace — albeit with a little help from father Leopold, himself a well-known musician in the service of the Archbishop of Salzburg. The “family business” scored a big success: Mozart’s playing in the Hall of Mirrors in the imperial summer residence delighted the “mother of the nation” Empress Maria Theresa, and she was even more charmed when the six-year-old, as the story goes, jumped up on to her lap after the performance.

Six years later, in 1768, Mozart, a well travelled veteran although still only 12 years old, met Maria Theresa again on two separate occasions. At the Wiener Hofburg the Empress granted him a two-hour audience; and at the consecration of Waisenhaus Church attended by the Empress he conducted the Waisenhaus Mass, which he had written especially for the occasion.

In 1786, Mozart faced a more serious challenge in the Schönbrunn Orangerie. The 30-year-old composer, at the zenith of his career, was called upon to square up to the court Kapellmeister Antonio Salieri under the critical gaze of Emperor Joseph II. Mozart performed “The Impresario”, which Salieri countered with “Prima la musica e poi le parole”. Even if posteriorly shakes its head at the Emperor’s willful decision, Salieri won. The verdict only confirmed Mozart’s aversion to court society and its strict ceremonial.

The best place to discover the private, happy Mozart is at the Mozarthaus Vienna, which was refurbished and reopened at the beginning of 2006. The composer of “The Magic Flute” (1791) and “The Abduction from the Seraglio” (1782) spent what were probably his happiest and most successful years, from 1784 to 1787, on the second floor of the building at Domgasse 5 in the heart of Vienna. It was here that Mozart composed “The Marriage of Figaro”, perhaps his most enjoyable opera, in 1786.

Another site that must have had fond memories for the Mozart family is St. Stephen’s Cathedral, where Wolfgang married his beloved Constanze (Weber) in 1782. The “Stefft”, as the Viennese affectionately call their cathedral, also played a role at the end of the musician’s life: Mozart died on December 5, 1791, and his body was blessed in the Crucifix Chapel there.

Mozart died at Rauhensteingasse 8 in the heart of the city. The house where he died has long since vanished, and today the site is occupied by Kaufhaus Steffl, one of Vienna’s most elegant department stores. It was in this house that he started to compose the famous unfinished Requiem — his musical legacy to the world, so to speak.

St. Marx Cemetery was the final lonely resting place of Europe’s greatest musician, the composer of numerous operas, masses and unforgettable melodies. The exact location of his grave is unknown to this day. As was customary at the time, Mozart was buried together with four or five others in an unmarked plot. Mozart’s resurrection began just a few days after his untimely death. A requiem service was held at St. Michael’s Church on December 10 at the instigation of Emanuel Schikaneder, director of Theater an der Wien, who had commissioned “The Magic Flute” in 1791. Mozart’s last work, the unfinished “Requiem”, is believed to have been heard at this service for the first time.

Even if Mozart did not always receive the acclaim that was his due while he was alive, the situation changed radically after his death. Prominent among the many sites dedicated to the composer is the Mozart Memorial in the Burggarten, which was erected in 1896. At the Central Cemetery, Mozart’s largest burial ground, a further Mozart memorial was erected in 1891 in the section devoted to prominent artists and politicians (“Ehrengräber”), next to other great composers such as Beethoven and Strauss. Also worth a look is the Mozart Fountain — or Magic Flute Fountain as it is often called — built in 1905 and featuring a bronze statue of the two main protagonists of the opera, the flute-playing Tamino in the embrace of his beloved Pamina. For those in need of consolation and sustenance, the great musician can also be remembered at the Café Mozart near the Vienna State Opera.

Source: Vienna Tourist Board

Interesting sights in Vienna

More info about Vienna can be found on www.vienna.info
Werner Pichler intends to use his seat on the EAACI ExCom as a step towards future active joint projects with European colleagues. He has extensive experience in the fields of allergy and immunology, which includes her paediatrics residency at Marmara University in Istanbul, followed by sub-specialty training in allergy and immunology at the Children’s Hospital in Boston, USA. She has headed the Department of Paediatric Allergy and Immunology at Marmara University since 2000, focusing on the primary prevention of allergic diseases. Departmental research is currently investigating sublingual immunotherapy, the protective effects of mycobacteria in atopic diseases, and the epidemiology of asthma in Turkey.

Barlan enjoys close collaboration with many European colleagues, and her priority is to strengthen existing ties between the Turkish Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, with its growing body of more than 200 members, and its European counterparts, and to fully integrate research in Turkey into the broader field of European science. She strongly believes that increased communication and collaboration between countries with different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic statuses will contribute to improved scientific knowledge and better medical care for people throughout Europe. Isil Barlan welcomes the opportunity to represent Turkey for the first time on EAACI ExCom as a step towards future active joint projects with European colleagues.

New members of the Executive Committee

**Isil Barlan** has extensive experience in the fields of allergy and immunology, which includes her paediatrics residency at Marmara University in Istanbul, followed by sub-specialty training in allergy and immunology at the Children’s Hospital in Boston, USA. She has headed the Department of Paediatric Allergy and Immunology at Marmara University since 2000, focusing on the primary prevention of allergic diseases. Departmental research is currently investigating sublingual immunotherapy, the protective effects of mycobacteria in atopic diseases, and the epidemiology of asthma in Turkey. Barlan enjoys close collaboration with many European colleagues, and her priority is to strengthen existing ties between the Turkish Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, with its growing body of more than 200 members, and its European counterparts, and to fully integrate research in Turkey into the broader field of European science. She strongly believes that increased communication and collaboration between countries with different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic statuses will contribute to improved scientific knowledge and better medical care for people throughout Europe. Isil Barlan welcomes the opportunity to represent Turkey for the first time on EAACI ExCom as a step towards future active joint projects with European colleagues.

**Werner Pichler** is head of the Department of Allergology at the Inselspital, the University Hospital of Bern, Switzerland. By training Pichler is a basic immunologist, a specialist in laboratory medicine, an internist, and an allergologist and clinical immunologist. He began his training in Vienna, followed by two and a half years as visiting scientist in the NIH (Bethesda, USA), and training in internal medicine and clinical immunology in Hannover, Germany. He served as chief of the allergy outpatient clinic in Bern from 1984, and became head of the department in 1999.

During his career, Pichler has published more than 250 papers, mainly focussing on work with T-cells, and some clinical studies addressing different fields such as urticaria, angio-oedema, asthma, specific immunotherapy, food allergy, and anaphylaxis. His chief scientific interest is drug hypersensitivity reactions, on which theme he leads a research group of eight to 10 people, mainly focussing on T-cell reactions against drugs.

Werner Pichler intends to use his seat on the EAACI ExCom to boost allergology as an independent discipline based on pathophysiological concepts. In this sense, allergology is related to, but not dependent on, other disciplines including pneumology, ENT, and dermatology, etc. He would like to stress the systemic nature of allergology and be a voice for the core disciplines in allergology that are often neglected, such as drug and food hypersensitivity, hymenoptera-allergy and anaphylaxis, and specific immunotherapy.

As vice-president of the Czech Society of Allergology and Clinical Immunology, which is quite large (about 1,000 members) and very active at the national level, Panzner aims to promote collaboration on the European level in the frame of EAACI, and helped organise the EAACI Joint Meeting and EAACI/GA²LEN Summer School. He considers that EAACI has the potential to be the main co-ordinator in broadening European collaboration, for example through exchanges of clinicians and scientists, and that EAACI should promote allergology as a full specialty, or at least a sub-specialty, in all European countries. Petr Panzner’s involvement in specialty training at the national level included helping redefine the national training curriculum, and he believes that EAACI should take an active part in co-ordinating and unifying training programmes all over Europe.

**Sergio Romagnani** started training in allergology in the late 1960s under the supervision of Italian allergists Professor Umberto Serafini and Professor Mario Ricci. He is currently Director of the Department of Internal Medicine and of the Excellence Centre for the Development of New Therapies at the University of Florence (Italy), and heads the Clinical Unit of Immunology and Cellular Therapies at the Hospital and University Complex of Careggi in Florence. His professional positions in the last three years include...
the presidencies of both EFIS (European Federation of Immunological Societies) and of SIICA (Italian Society of Immunology, Clinical Immunology, and Allergology), and he holds the chair of the Clinical Immunology Committee (CIC) in the Council of IUIS (International Unit of Immunological Societies).

Sergio Romagnani’s extensive experience in the field of immunology, clinical immunology, and allergy has contributed to his interest in broadening the scientific level of EAACI activities to ensure a future for basic immunologists and clinical allergists, based on mutual interaction between clinical and basic science. Basic immunologists can face significant setbacks in supporting their further education due to the lack of investment by drug companies in their field, but the future of clinical immunologists, and perhaps also allergists, does not look bright, in part due to organ specialists encroaching on their fields of study. Therefore, only by maintaining strict links between the prestige and culture of basic immunology and the social importance of clinical work can the future of this group of disciplines be guaranteed. In Romagnani’s view, the fact that the World Allergy Organisation (WAO) is an affiliated society of IUIS confirms the importance of mutually dependent interaction between immunology and allergy.

As a past president of the Italian Society of Immunology, Clinical Immunology, and Allergology, Romagnani favours the unification of the three societies in Italy in the field of allergy in the context of an Italian Federation of Immunological and Allergological Societies (IFIAS). He aims to help Italian allergists to further this project as quickly as possible through his work as a member of the Executive Committee of EAACI.

Welcome the New President of the AAAAI

Dr. Platts-Mills is the 62nd President of the Academy. In 1982, he became Professor of Medicine and Head, Division of Allergy and Clinical Immunology at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, Charlottesville, Virginia. In that capacity, he has trained numerous post-graduates and fellows in the field.

Born in Great Britain, he attended Bailliol College Oxford University and then obtained his medical degree from St. Thomas Hospital in London in 1967. He received his internal medicine training at the Royal College of Physicians in London after which he served as a fellow in allergy and immunology at Johns Hopkins from 1971–1974. Subsequently, he received a Ph.D. in medicine from London University in 1983. Dr. Platts-Mills has a very distinguished career in medicine and has authored and co-authored numerous peer-reviewed scientific articles, book chapters and editorials. He is probably best known for his extensive work in the field of indoor allergens. Affectionately known as the “Dust Mite King”, he states that, “My major scientific theme is to focus on the importance of perennial allergens in chronic allergic diseases”. He is currently the Oscar Swineford Jr. Professor of Medicine and Head of the Asthma and Allergic Disease Center at the University of Virginia.

Dr. Platts-Mills is married to Roberta (Bobbi); they have four children. Tom, his wife and the children are all avid hikers. Eliza, his oldest daughter, is a lawyer living in Washington, D.C. Tim, his second child, is a third year emergency medicine resident at the University of California San Francisco in Fresno, CA. The youngest two are fraternal twins. James is a first year medical student at the University of Virginia, and Oliver is enrolled in a masters program in systems engineering at the same institution. Avant Garde music is another family love. In summary, music, mountains and the movies are an integral part of the Platts-Mills family. Bobbi, his wife, serves as an Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Admissions at the University of Virginia.

During his presidency, Dr. Platts-Mills’ major focus will be to assist training programs, and in particular, support faculty development in institutions in North America. He wants to develop bridging grants to help support fellows’ interest in going into academic medicine, the object being to bridge the time between fellowship and the time when they are adequately prepared to apply for government-supported grants. He states, “I intend to enjoy my year and am pleased to have an opportunity to help the specialty”. Congratulations to Tom Platts-Mills, his wife, Roberta, and to his family. The presidency is in good hands!

Richard F. Lockey, M.D
WONDA (WOrld Network for Drug Allergy)

The European Network for Drug Allergy/the core group of the EAACI Interest Group on Drug Allergy is pleased to announce its latest scientific effort: WONDA.

WONDA is a network of centres with high clinical and experimental research competence across Europe and outside Europe, conducting and providing platforms for clinical, translational, intra-disciplinary, and multi-disciplinary research in the domain of drug hypersensitivity and drug allergy.

Few studies on adverse drug reactions

Adverse drug reactions (ADRs) affect 10–20% of hospitalised patients and more than 7% of the general population. Hypersensitivity reactions are but one of the many different types of ADRs. They represent more than 15% of all ADRs. They may be potentially life-threatening, prolong hospitalisation, affect the drug-prescribing patterns of physicians, and result in socio-economic costs. Moreover, they are a main cause of drug withdrawal from the market, and thus of great financial importance for the pharmaceutical industry. Apart from the ongoing Euroscar project focussing on severe cutaneous reactions only, and a few national continuous surveys such as the French GERAP survey on anaphylaxis during general anaesthesia, there are very few well designed epidemiological studies on hypersensitivity drug reactions, and very few on ADRs in general. The connection of ADR and drug intake is rarely proven and both under diagnosis and over diagnosis must be taken into account. Severe reactions including anaphylaxis, drug hypersensitivity syndromes, Stevens Johnson syndrome/toxic epidermal necrolysis, vasculitis, and hepatitis are also associated with significant morbidity and mortality.

Identifying risk factors

Drugs are capable of inducing all the types of immunological reactions described by Gell and Coombs (i.e., allergic drug hypersensitivities) and sometimes mimic drug allergy but without an immunological mechanism (i.e., non-allergic drug hypersensitivities). Only a few drug allergen determinants and a few mechanistic pathways have been pinpointed. Much remains to be learned, and this may help to design biological tests. New information about different individual risks with regard to pharmacological pathways (e.g., drug metabolising enzymes such as CYP450s) or immunological factors should ultimately find persons at higher or lower risk for drug allergy. Although several risk factors have been identified, their clinical importance is not fully understood yet. Future progress in immunogenetics and pharmacogenetics may help identify populations at risk for specific types of reactions. Better understanding of how patients become sensitised and react to chemical compounds will help the global field of human-environmental xenobiotics interaction.

Lack of standardisation

Finally, although the diagnostic procedure of drug allergies has greatly improved over the last six years, thanks to the consensus reports by the European Network for Drug Allergy/the core group of the EAACI drug allergy interest group, there is a great heterogeneity worldwide of how to perform the relevant tests, and very little standardisation has been achieved to date. Although drug allergy is a daily problem for practitioners and some patients, the level of awareness is dramatically low as compared to the one of asthma, for example, which is less prevalent. Again, compared to respiratory allergies, there are almost no institutional (including regulatory agencies) or pharmaceutical supports concerning drug allergies, leading to a misunderstanding of the pathomechanisms, a weakness of drug allergy work-up, a lack of ready-to-use diagnostic tools, and consequently a lack of preventive action. We need the help of other specialists: toxicologists, pharmacologists, chemists, geneticists, and others in order to exchange views and improve our knowledge of drug allergy dramatically.

WONDA – a network of excellence

The objective of WONDA is to establish an international network of centres of excellence devoted to the field of drug hypersensitivity. Our primary aim is not to perform highly focussed definite projects but to raise all the unanswered questions in structured work packages covering most, if not all, aspects of drug hypersensitivity. These questions will be addressed and the WONDA network of excellence will stimulate and assist WONDA members to quickly focus on a number of particular basic or clinical projects. Regular collaboration, exchange of ideas, and biological probes as well as techniques should result in a better understanding of these diseases and thus improve the diagnosis and prevention of these drug-related problems. This will be a major innovation.
By comparison with respiratory or food allergies, very few teams are involved in drug allergy research, although it has a major public health burden as simply eliminating a drug because of a suspicion of hypersensitivity has dramatic health and economic consequences. This is not only a problem of funding, since the field of drug allergy research is very heterogeneous, including clinicians (mainly allergologists, dermatologists, and clinical immunologists), pharmacologists, toxicologists, immunologists, chemists, and, most recently, geneticists. These people do not usually cross paths, given the nature of their disciplines. Only a network of excellence (NoE) would make it possible to gather such a multi-disciplinary group and raise outstanding projects and the financing to fund them.

**WONDA activities**

The integrating activities of the WONDA NoE are based on several approaches using modern and electronic communication systems. Global work packages will be subdivided into more specific and operational work packages.

- Integration and platform architecture
- Provision of an open platform for joint activities related to drug allergy:
  - Epidemiology platform
  - Clinical platform
  - Biological tests platform
  - Pharmacology platform
  - Immunology platform
  - Genomic platform
  - Predictive immunotoxicology and research-needs platform
  - Education and training platform
  - Communication and awareness platform

**The WONDA Committee**

Five clinicians/researchers will act as chairpersons. Professor Pascal Demoly from the University of Montpellier, France, will co-ordinate the WONDA NoE. Professor Werner Pichler from the University of Bern, Switzerland, will act as co-chairman. Both co-ordinators will chair the Assembly and the Executive Committee and will be directly responsible for the Management Office, which will assist in the running of the NoE. Professor Antonio Romano from the University of Rome, Italy, will act as WONDA Executive Secretary. Two respected authorities in the area of drug allergy: Professor N. Franklin Adkinson, Baltimore, USA, and Professor Alain De Weck, Bern, Switzerland, will help as honorary presidents.

**EAACI Asthma Section**

**Membership**

As of January 2006, the Asthma Section has 1,263 members with voting rights (the largest section of the academy), of whom 386 are junior members.

The Asthma Section aims:

- to promote understanding of the aetiology and mechanisms of asthma
- to encourage the development of safe and effective therapeutic strategies
- to disseminate the latest information regarding patient care
- to promote the institution of basic standards for the management of patients with asthma, supported by evidence-based strategies

**Activities in 2005**

An almost entirely new board was elected at the Section Business Meeting in Munich in June 2005.

The main section activity for 2005 was the Summer School in Rotterdam “Asthma and Allergy: Bridging the gap between basic and clinical science”, organised jointly by the Asthma Section and by Ga2len (August 29th–31st). A total of 104 participants from Europe, Georgia, Iran, Russia, and the United States attended. The summer school was highly appreciated by both faculty and students. It featured four main themes: Asthma, nature or nurture, comprising the pathogenesis of asthma with special emphasis on genetics, psychological factors, environment, exercise, and infections; Immunopathology of asthma, which unravelled the secrets of innate immunity, T-cells, neuro-immune interactions, mast cells, eosinophils, and chemokines; Assessment and monitoring of asthma, detailing bronchial hyperreactivity, sputum induction, NO-measurement, and airway remodelling; Evidence-based medicine in airway disease, which presented several international guidelines including GINA, ARIA, GOLD, and GARD.

Some lectures were translated into webcasts, and made an important contribution by the section to the EAACI website.
A symposium was organised with the Dutch Asthma Foundation. It covered the topics Asthma therapy and failure, which discussed current therapeutic approaches and new asthma therapies. This was followed by a session on the early diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of asthma and allergy in children. In addition, interactive sessions were organised in small groups in which participants were able to present their own work. A variety of research was presented, ranging from basic science to clinical investigations. Discussions were lively, and presenters received helpful feedback on their projects. One afternoon was dedicated to workshops on animal models, immunopathology, diagnostic approaches, and asthma and allergy in the clinic. These workshops provided the opportunity for participants to watch several procedures and conduct experiments. The summer school benefited from an enthusiastic faculty, which was again circulated to all section members for further comments, before finally being submitted to the Local Organising Committee. The board thanks the many members who contributed excellent ideas for the Scientific Programme in Gothenburg 2007, and hopes this lively enthusiasm will continue to make a dynamic contribution to the section’s scientific activities.

### Activities in 2006 and 2007

The board agreed to continue discussions with the ERS and AAAI on joint symposia and joint summer schools. The Asthma Section feels strongly that links should be maintained and strengthened with these two societies to help broaden the scientific programme and increase membership of the academy.

### Asthma Section contribution to EAACI Congress in Vienna 2006

The following symposia and workshops are planned by the Asthma Section: Occupational versus non-occupational asthma; Control of inflammation in asthma; Asthma: phenotypes, mechanisms, and treatment; Cellular therapy for asthma: science fiction or science fact; Impact of novel asthma genes on novel therapies; Neural mechanisms in asthma; Mechanisms of mucus synthesis and secretion in asthma. Poster sessions and oral abstract sessions are also planned, and all section members are warmly invited to attend and to engage in discussions with the aim of becoming more familiar with the work done by other participants, and also to establish common projects.

### Asthma Section contribution to EAACI Congress in Gothenburg 2007

The section board carried out extensive work for this event. All members were contacted and asked for suggestions about symposia, workshops, and speakers, after which the board collated all proposals and assembled a final proposal which was again circulated to all section members for further comments, before finally being submitted to the Local Organising Committee. The board thanks the many members who contributed excellent ideas for the Scientific Programme in Gothenburg 2007, and hopes this lively enthusiasm will continue to make a dynamic contribution to the section’s scientific activities.

### Asthma Section Website

The section’s website contains all the information related to section activities: board meetings, reports from summer schools, and the abstracts from the Interasthma meeting in Bilbao. The section will announce all upcoming events and activities online.

New tools, such as the password protection limiting the availability of material to EAACI members and the DOI (digital object identifier), which is to make the materials displayed on the website citable, will hopefully increase the contribution of section members to the scientific content of the website. Moreover, case reports will also be made available online in a format approaching the requirements of e-Learning.
pollen stations and also show spore counts in the future. The stations for the network should have regular-use air sampling equipment, such as a Burkard, to collect pollen.

**Activities for 2006 and 2007**

1. The group will collect information about studies done in the EAACI context on aerobiology and pollen.
2. It will promote and develop a network relating to the type and quantity of pollen in every country that has integrated its national society into EAACI.
3. The IG will promote connections with studies related to indoor allergens and its impact on human health.
4. It will manage the EAACI website.
5. It will organise at least one workshop or meeting at EAACI congresses to make information available about the work developed by the IG.
6. It will promote studies of levels of pollution and their eventual implication for the prevalence of respiratory diseases such as rhinitis and asthma.
7. The group will develop a new taskforce on “Aerobiology and Pollution”, defining a position paper related to trees and other plants whose pollination can develop allergic disease in humans.
8. The IG will promote links between each National Allergy Society integrated into the EAACI by having a member nominated from the society to the Interest Group, to share information regarding pollution and pollination in different countries.
9. The group will continue to request that the Executive Committee set up a taskforce to prepare an actualised position paper on “Pollen grains and air pollution in Europe as causes of respiratory allergy.”
10. Finally, it will collaborate with junior members and young researchers regarding the possibility of creating an award for work done on the topic of aerobiology and air pollution.

**Interest Group Website**

The group’s website (found on www.eaaci.net) contains all information related to activities, including board meeting minutes, reports from summer schools, and articles related to our interest group, which can be downloaded. The IG will announce upcoming activities online.

**Active group projects, such as contributions to the EAACI website, include the dissemination of information about aerobiology and pollution, and the supply of links with aerobiology websites in contact with National Allergy Societies and international networks collecting data about biometeorological agents and pollution, which are interested in providing this information online.**

**European research**

Several active members of the IG are involved in research activities funded by the EU. REDALL, co-ordinated by Angelika Paschke, University of Hamburg, is one of the final projects funded by the 5th Framework Programme. The major aim is to study allergies to animal-derived foods, i.e. milk, egg, and meat, across Europe and to develop hypo-allergenic preparations of those foods. EuroPrevall, an integrated project involving 54 partners and co-ordinated by Clare Mills, Institute of Food Research, Norwich, started in June 2005. It aims to study the prevalence of food allergies across Europe. Various other issues, such as the relation of genes and environment, the impact of the food matrix, novel in vitro diagnostics, socio-economic aspects, and communication are also addressed.

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**EAACI Food Allergy Interest Group**

Barbara Ballmer-Weber, previously secretary of the Food Allergy IG, was elected as the new chairperson of the group at the World Allergy Congress in Munich. Stefan Vieths was elected as secretary. Warm thanks are extended to Ronald van Ree, who directed the activities of the group for the last two years.

**Training course**

An EAACI/GA²LEN training course in food allergy was initiated and organised as a joint event between the Dermatology Section, the Paediatric Section, and the Food Allergy IG, taking place in Hindsgavl Castle, Denmark during April 8-11th, 2006. The chair of the organising committee is Carsten Bindslev-Jensen. The meeting has a strong clinical focus and is aimed at updating clinicians in the diagnosis and treatment of food allergy.

**Position papers**

Various position papers were planned by the IG and are at different levels of realisation. Thomas Werfel is currently organising a taskforce on a position paper addressing the impact of food allergy on atopic dermatitis. Various companies vigorously promote in vitro tests, in particular for the diagnosis of food allergy, for which the clinical relevance is doubtful and lacks any scientific proof. With concern, the IG observed increasing use of these tests. Therefore, in collaboration with the IG In Vitro Diagnosis, a suggestion for a position paper on non-proven methods in food allergy diagnosis has been submitted to the Executive Committee.
Bronchial asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease characterised by reversible airway obstruction and bronchial hyperreactivity. Its prevalence in modern societies has been steadily increasing for years. Understanding the rules of asthma inheritance might allow for early detection of persons who are at increased risk of developing asthma and the early institution of appropriate therapy and/or prophylaxis. Unfortunately, as with many other chronic inflammatory diseases, asthma is not inherited in the way described by Mendel and Morgan that indicates that products of many genes co-operate, giving rise to the final phenotype of the disease.

Gene-gene interactions which lead to increased risk of the development of asthmatic phenotype have been demonstrated already. A very good example may be the interaction of interleukin IL-13 with IL-4 receptor alpha (IL-4Ra). The functional receptor for IL-13 comprises the two subunits IL-13 receptor alpha 1 (IL-13Ra1) and IL-4Ra. Several polymorphisms associated with asthma, total serum IgE concentration, and bronchial hyperreactivity have been demonstrated in the genes encoding IL-13 and IL-4Ra. The majority of single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) in the IL-13 gene, such as the -1111 C/T polymorphism, is located in the regions that influence transcription of mRNA for IL-13. SNPs in the IL-4Ra gene are located both in the promoter region and in the regions coding for IL-4Ra polypeptide. Moreover, SNPs in the IL-4Ra gene were demonstrated in asthmatic patients in the regions coding for the extracellular and intracellular domains of the receptor. Mutations in the extracellular domains, such as I50V, affect the binding of IL-4R ligands, while mutations in the intracellular domains, such as S478P and Q551R, affect intracellular signalling in response to IL-4R activation. The isolated S478P polymorphic variant of IL-4Ra(SS) is associated with increased total serum IgE, while the isolated -1111 C/T variants of IL-13 (CT, TT) are associated with bronchial hyperresponsiveness. Individuals with the risk genotypes for both genes are at five times greater risk of developing asthma compared with the non-risk genotypes.

Therefore, in order to investigate any single mutation as a risk factor for developing asthmatic phenotype, one should search for possible interactions between the other candidate genes and consider the results in the context of the given variance of these genes. Moreover, in order to investigate the genetic background of asthma, which is a complex, polygenic disease, one may obtain useful information by studying the phenotypes which are associated with asthma and which can be measured objectively, such as total serum IgE and bronchial hyperresponsiveness. Finally, more stringent characterisation of asthmatic phenotype and searching more genetically homogenous populations may increase understanding of the role of a single gene in the development of asthma.

Studies performed on monozygotic twins demonstrated that despite the identical genotypes shared by the siblings the variability of asthmatic phenotypes is rather high. The estimated concordance for monozygotic twins for asthma is 35–50%. This indicates that other, non-genetic, factors play at least as important a role as identical genotypes.

This demonstration of the important role of environmental factors led to the investigation of possible interactions between individual genes and the environment. Genome-wide screening studies demonstrated that environmental tobacco exposure early in life affects genetic predisposition to developing the asthmatic phenotype. The significant linkage of asthma and bronchial hyperresponsiveness to chromosome 5q31 was demonstrated. Further studies, including family-based and cross-sectional cohort analysis of the CD14 gene, which is located in the region 5q31, demonstrated significant interaction by several polymorphic variants of CD14 with tobacco smoke exposure in the development of asthmatic phenotypes. With exposure to tobacco smoke, subjects carrying G nucleotide in the position -159 of the CD14 promoter region have lower total serum IgE than those carrying C allele. The mutation C-159T in the promoter region of CD14 is associated with increased synthesis of CD14, which is reflected by higher plasma soluble CD14 levels in TT homozygotes than in CC homozygotes.

Another gene located on the chromosome 5q close to the CD14 and IL-13 genes is TIM-1, originally described as a hepatitis A virus cellular receptor. The high expression of TIM-1 is observed on Th2 lymphocytes, and TIM-1 appears to regulate the function of these cells. Several polymorphisms of the TIM-1 gene have been described and linked to autoimmune and allergic diseases. The mutation resulted in the insertion of the MTTTVP peptide in the position 157 of the mature protein to protect against atopy. Further stratifications revealed that this effect was demonstrated only in patients seropositive for hepatitis A virus, indicating that infection with hepatitis A virus exerts a protective effect. The longer form (containing MTTTVP repeats) of TIM-1 binds more strongly to hepatitis A virus and therefore facilitates the infection of Th2 cells. Subsequently, the infected Th2 cells are destroyed and then the balance is shifted towards the non-atopic Th1 type phenotype. Interestingly, as the prevalence of hepatitis A infection decreases, the role of the TIM-1 157 in MTTVVP polymorphism in the development of atopic phenotype is less important. Ideally, if hepatitis A infection is eliminated, the polymorphism will no longer have any effect on the prevalence of atopy. This effect of hepatitis A virus infection on the prevalence of atopy demonstrates that our genes do. The interaction between genes and environment that results in the current development of atopic phenotype may not be effective in the future, and may not have been of great consequence for our ancestors.

Finally, it should be kept in mind that genetic and environmental factors not only affect the development of asthma and other allergic diseases, they also affect the course of the disease, influencing its severity and its response (susceptibility) to therapy.

Krzysztof Kowal
The allergy march

Allergic sensitisations as well as clinical manifestations of atopy are rarely present at birth. The term “allergic march” refers to the characteristic sequence of sensitisations to food and environmental allergens as well as to atopic phenotypes, which develop in characteristic time windows, persist for months or years, and may stay throughout life or disappear spontaneously.

For generations, although it has been known that allergic diseases run in families, the molecular background of genetic susceptibility is still not completely understood. A variety of single nuclear polymorphisms has recently been described for asthma. Some genetic regions, in which most probably important genes for atopic dermatitis are located, have been identified. Some atopy-related polymorphisms have been demonstrated to provide a specific susceptibility to environmental factors, such as tobacco smoke. As an example, a specific polymorphism in the promoter region of the gene encoding IL-13 has been shown to be related to serum IgE levels in children. Specific genotypes are associated with even higher IgE levels when the children grow up in a domestic environment with tobacco smoke exposure.

The early IgE responses to food, coupled with a positive family history for asthma and infantile manifestation of atopic dermatitis, are strong and potent predictors for the subsequent development of asthma in childhood.

The German MAS cohort study, a non-interventional longitudinal prospective study, has clearly demonstrated that 80% of all atopic dermatitis infants develop partial or complete remission of eczematous lesions by their seventh birthday. One predictor for the persistence of eczema until adolescence is a high severity in infancy, in tandem with sensitisation to food proteins.

Infantile wheeze is quite frequently observed during the first two years of life. It is mostly associated with viral triggers such as RS and rhinovirus. Most wheezy children manifest no airway symptoms by the age of 15, however, compared to those children who never wheezed in childhood, for whom the risk of asthma in adolescence, as demonstrated by the MAS cohort, is significantly increased.

Longitudinal cohort studies, in which children are followed from birth onwards, are currently being performed in several European countries. They recently joined within the GA²LEN network to generate one common European databank, which will become a powerful tool to address questions and hypothesis that cannot be addressed by smaller study groups. Hopefully, the data extracted from the common GA²LEN birth cohort will lead to new insights into the complex interaction between genes, environment, and lifestyle, and provide new avenues for preventive intervention in infancy and childhood.

Ulrich Wahn
**HISTAMINE as immune regulator**

Since its discovery more than 100 years ago, histamine (2-[4-imidazole]-ethylamine) has been one of the most intensely studied molecules in medicine.

Histamine plays an important role both in normal human physiology as well as in various pathologies. It is involved in cell proliferation and differentiation, haematopoiesis, embryonic development, regeneration, and wound healing. Within the central nervous system, histamine is involved in cognition and memory, the regulation of the waking and sleeping cycle, energy, and endocrine homeostasis. Recent developments in histamine research have led to a change in approach to the role of this mediator and its receptors in allergic inflammatory reactions. Histamine and its at least four different receptors display a complex system with distinct functions of receptor subtypes and their differential expression, which changes according to the stage of cell differentiation as well as micro-environmental influences.

**Histamine**, originally considered a mediator of acute inflammatory and immediate hypersensitivity responses, has also been demonstrated to affect chronic inflammation and regulate several essential events in the immune response. It can influence numerous functions of macrophages, dendritic cells, T lymphocytes, B lymphocytes, epithelial and endothelial cells, including their proliferation, the production of cytokines, and the expression of cell adhesion molecules or MHC class II antigens. Histamine acting through its receptor (HR) type 2 positively interferes with the peripheral antigen tolerance induced by T regulatory (Treg) cells in several pathways. It also intervenes in the Th1/Th2 cell balance and consequently antibody formation. On the other hand, various cytokines control its synthesis, release, and the expression of histamine receptors. Recently, Bphs, a non-major histocompatibility complex-linked gene involved in the susceptibility to many auto-immune diseases, has been identified as the HR1 gene in mice.

The demonstration of histamine-cytokine cross-talk, the ability to newly synthesise and liberate histamine without storage by immunocompetent cells, the discovery of novel histamine receptors such as HR4, which is preferentially expressed on haematopoietic and immunocompetent cells, and the demonstration of T-cells as the target for H1 antihistamines have provided further benefit to the suppression of allergic inflammatory responses. Whether therapies targeting H1 and other histamine receptors provide further benefit to the suppression of allergic inflammatory responses remains to be elucidated.

**Further reading**


**Substantial evidence** has been accumulated about histamine metabolism, receptors, signal transduction, physiological and pathological effects, but the complex interrelationship and cross-talk by histamine, its receptors and other G-protein coupled receptors remain to be understood.

*Marek Jutel*

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Are there current trends of pollen change in Europe?

Using more than 30,000 years of daily pollen records from Europe supported by the members of epi/EAN, trends were outlined for the start, peak, and end as well as trends for the intensity and duration of pollen seasons during the past three decades.

In general, an earlier start and peak of pollen seasons was evident, being more pronounced in species that bloom earlier in the year. The later the flowering time, the less significant become trends towards the earlier start of the season. A later end of the season becomes more likely the later the flowering period. Overall, the pollen season expands. Pollen seasons became longer, in particular for species flowering after March and April. An increase in the amount of pollen in the air is not ordinary, but is more frequently observed for grass and weed pollen than for tree pollen.

Differing patterns were observed for all the characteristics mentioned above in different climatic zones and at different elevations. The most significant changes were found in Central Europe and at elevations between 50m and 1,000m above sea level. The boreal zone, warm humid climates, and the Mediterranean area showed the fewest significant trends.

Most remarkable, in regard to human health, has been the significantly increasing occurrence of ragweed pollen in many European regions, which increased significantly from the beginning of the 1990s. Originating from two hot spots – the Carpathian Basin and the Rhône Valley – the plant has invaded Northern Italy and various Central European areas and headed north to southern Sweden. By long-range pollen transport, the thresholds for allergic complaints have been exceeded, even as far north as the Stockholm area in 2002 and near the Arctic Circle in 2005. Within the next decade, ragweed pollen allergy is likely to become a problem in a number of regions that have not been previously affected. We observe a tendency to homogenous peak pollen seasons of two or more weeks, compared to the multiple short-term high-load events that were prevalent formerly.

Birch pollen is suspected of being the basis of modifications in the allergen content. Several reports indicate the increasing prevalence of birch pollen allergy, although local pollen levels were not on the increase. Birch pollen seasons observe significant adjustments in terms of intensity year by year. Cyclic fluctuations are frequently observed, and in most cases synchronous all over the continent, but the alternating oscillations cannot be predicted due to the frequent disruption of these usually biannual cycles. Another aspect seems remarkable: more or less continuous seasons of birch pollen become increasingly seldom – there is a clear tendency to short interruptions of the season due to unsettled weather conditions. A single (or doubled) continuous period of high birch pollen loads will probably be replaced in future by several days of peak load, alternating with almost pollen-free periods of several days. In this context, we frequently see a tendency of higher peak loads, while the overall number of days with birch pollen in the air will decrease. This will demand a revision in former descriptions of a classic birch pollen season.

There is clear evidence of climate change during the past decades with influence on the timing, duration, and intensity of pollen seasons. On the other hand, the anthropogenic impact on agricultural, urban, and wilderness environments may well have superimposed these climate-induced floral reactions. Various pollen types show trends to higher pollen production and/or longer duration of season, but we see crucial differences within the genera when breaking down different climates and elevations.

S. Jäger
Report on GA²LEN Symposium in Minsk, Belarus

22nd–23rd September, 2005

GA²LEN and EAACI, in co-operation with the Belarussian Institute for Epidemiology and Microbiology, organised a continuous education symposium in Minsk, the capital of the Republic of Belarus. The programme for this event was prepared in close co-operation with the national academy of post-graduate education, leading paediatricians, and general practitioners.

The aim of the symposium was to provide state-of-the-art lectures covering the main topics of allergology and clinical immunology, including, among others, “Diagnosis” (Prof. I. Kaidashev), “Food allergy” (Dr. P. Eigenmann), “Atopic Dermatitis” (Dr. U. Raap), “Primary Immunodeficiencies” (Prof. V. Wahn) and “Respiratory allergy” (Prof. P. Van Cauwenberge, Prof. J. Lötvall). Presentations on similar topics by Belarussian colleagues (Prof. L. Titov, Prof. S. Fedorovich, Prof. N. Skepyan, Prof. I. Vasilevsky, Prof. L. Belyaeva, et al.) allowed for some exchange on practice guidelines, and generated fruitful discussion. A round-table session on immunotherapy made for a particularly lively discussion.

Total participant numbers approached 200 allergists, paediatricians, and primary-care physicians. The participants were enthusiastic about this initiative, which provided them with an exceptional opportunity for continuous education with prominent international speakers. As in most countries from the former Soviet block, a large number of doctors has a high level of specialised education. Belarussian allergists are deeply involved in fighting allergy epidemics, although they are constrained by limited means.

All participants welcomed the possibility of learning about evidence-based medicine and joining the European standard. Belarussian allergists are interested in expanding international scientific contacts and joint research work within European community projects. The symposium discovered many subjects of mutual scientific interest. Another important aim is the education of Belarussian students and the post-diploma training of junior specialists in European countries.

The symposium also promoted the specialty of allergology and clinical immunology in Belarus. Indeed, we learned that although up to 20% of the population may suffer from allergic asthma or allergic rhinitis, only around 5% can be treated by immunotherapy due to the insufficient number of trained physicians. The presence of the deputy minister of health and the large media interest on television and in the print media increased the awareness of national authorities and the population in general about the extent of the allergy epidemic.

This symposium, organised in the “PAPRICA style” (state-of-the-art presentations with plenty of discussion time), was considered to be a significant success. It provided specialists and primary-care physicians with a high scientific standard in their continuous medical education. We attached particular significance to the personal communication with colleagues during this international conference, as we believe that such initiatives strengthen ties with the European Community of Allergologists and Clinical Immunologists.

Dr. Philippe Eigenmann, Geneva, and Prof. Leonid Titov, Minsk, co-organisers of the symposium
PAPRICA Symposium in Ukraine
5th October, 2005

The second PAPRICA symposium was held in Kiev, Ukraine, following the first symposium held in Ireland in November 2004. The PAPRICA Symposia (Paediatric Allergy for PRImary CAre physicians) are an initiative by the Section on Pediatrics EAACI, co-financed by EAACI and GA\textsuperscript{2}LEN. This one-day symposium was organised in close co-operation with Ukrainian allergists, paediatricians, and general practitioners.

The five topics: “The allergic child”, “Food allergy”, “Atopic dermatitis”, “Respiratory allergy in childhood”, and “Drug Allergy” were covered by visiting speakers Antonella Muraro, Jonathan Hourihane, Zsolt Szepfalusi, and Philippe Eigenmann, as well as Ukrainian speakers Olga Lasyska, S. Nedelskaya, E. Ohotnikova, and Valentina Chopia. Each topic raised lively discussion during the plenary sessions as well as afterwards.

Attendance at the symposium totalled 150 participants from all over the country. In Ukraine, allergic children are traditionally taken care of by educated specialists, but lack of funding for continuous education prevents them from attending international meetings. The format of the PAPRICA Symposia, bringing state-of-the-art continuous education directly to these practitioners, was highly appreciated.

This PAPRICA initiative could only be organised due to the excellent collaboration with the Ukrainian Society of Allergology and Clinical Immunology, and more specifically the efforts of George Drannik and Igor Kaidashev.

The initiative will continue in 2006. The success of this format of symposium “going local” will probably contribute to the development of a larger number of symposia, also addressing primary-care physicians in contact with adult allergic patients.

Philippe Eigenmann, Geneva, George Drannik, Kiev, and Igor Kaidashev, Poltava, co-organisers of the symposium

SP-EAACI and PA-ERS Joint Meeting in Prague
12–15th November, 2005

The Section on Paediatrics of the European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology held a three-day joint meeting with the Paediatric Assembly of the European Respiratory Society in Prague from 12–15th November, 2005. The topics covered by the 63 speakers were received by the members of both societies with significant interest.

Most European countries and others outside Europe were represented by 500 participants who showed full attendance at all sessions, despite the attractions offered by the beautiful city of Prague. Lively debates between speakers and discussions generated by questions from the audience constituted one of the major successes of this meeting. The delegates also unanimously welcomed the very friendly, almost “family-like” atmosphere generated by this joint meeting of paediatric allergists and paediatric pulmonologists.

The event was considered a distinct success by the organisers as well as the participants. Previously, joint meetings by the Paediatric Assembly of the ERS and the Section on Paediatrics of the EAACI were held on a bi-annual and tri-annual basis. It has been decided to hold this joint meeting bi-annually to consolidate existing clinical and research collaborations, as well as generate new friendships.

Philippe Eigenmann, Chairperson SP-EAACI and Petr Pohunek, President of L.O.C.
A total of 74 doctoral and postdoctoral scientists from 20 countries attended the 4th EAACI-GA²LEN Davos Meeting “Basic Immunology Research in Allergy and Clinical Immunology” that took place during 16–19th February, 2006 in Grainau, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. The meeting was organised by the EAACI Immunology Section and the ZAUM-Center for Allergy and Environment, Technical University Munich, and was made possible by generous support from GA²LEN.

Thilo Jakob and the local organising committee welcomed the participants at Eibsee Hotel at the foot of Germany’s highest mountain, the Zugspitze, for a three-day meeting of the highest scientific standard. It included six symposia featuring three main topics: innate immunity, adaptive immunity and regulation, and allergic inflammation. Each symposium was introduced by outstanding keynote lectures by some of the most renowned speakers in the field of basic immunology: Philippa Marrack, Hermann Wagner, Ron Germain, Richard Flavell, Ulrich von Andrian, and Dale Umetsu proved their exceptional scientific and rhetorical reputations while covering cutting-edge developments in the fields of innate and adaptive immunity, the regulation of the immune response, and the mechanisms of allergic inflammation. In the morning and evening, keynote lectures were followed by excellent presentations selected from submitted abstracts. Ample time was reserved for passionate discussion after both the keynote lectures and the oral presentations.

Between the morning and the afternoon sessions, there was just enough time to stretch our legs either by going downhill skiing at the Zugspitze or cross-country skiing in the scenic mountains of Bavaria. As in previous years, the after-dinner poster sessions were a great success and gave young scientists the opportunity to interact with known talents in the field. The active poster discussion still ongoing at midnight clearly demonstrated that the organisers had managed to create a stimulating atmosphere in which it was possible to discuss controversial concepts, exchange novel ideas, and build new friendships personally and scientifically.

During the closing, Anthony Frew, acting president of the EAACI, announced that this kind of meeting will continue, and that planning for the 5th EAACI-GA²LEN Davos Meeting “Basic Immunology Research in Allergy and Asthma” is already underway. Details will be announced online on the GA²LEN and the EAACI websites.

Thilo Jakob
Chairman of the EAACI Immunology Section
EAACI and GA²LEN are currently enhancing and developing the role of the activity we have called “summer schools”. EAACI started holding these courses in the late 1990s to attract and support young scientists and clinicians in the allergy field. Initially, the schools were locally organised alternatively in Eastern and Western Europe, but have expanded their scope in the last two years. The aims and the long-term development of the course were discussed at a taskforce meeting in February 2006.

In principle, we plan to organise one general allergy course each year, and at least one more specialised summer school. In 2006, we plan to hold a summer school on the topic “Asthma Exacerbations”, which will be held in Chalkidiki in Greece; see www.eaaci.net for details. In late March 2006, we organised a school on “Mouse Models of Allergy and Asthma”, which, like the Chalkidiki course, is an example of a specialised course with a very clear scientific focus, similar to the successful EAACI/GA²LEN Davos Winter Courses. We currently plan to arrange an additional general allergy course in the second half of 2006, the location of which is yet to be decided.

Future funding
Attendance at a summer school has been almost totally subsidised for juniors under the age of 35, with funding primarily provided by GA²LEN and EAACI, as well as external sponsors on some occasions. We are holding close discussions with GA²LEN to explore ways to extend the EAACI/GA²LEN summer school course well beyond the five-year span of the GA²LEN funding from the EU. In this process, the long-term finances of the programme are a key issue, as the cost of a summer school is in the region of €60,000–€100,000, depending on the number of participants and the location. To sustain the regularity and the high quality of the summer schools, we need to find a way to make the programme viable and financially self-sustaining from a long-term perspective, and we are carefully researching ways of achieving this goal. One possibility may be that all participants, or of course their employers, may pay a nominal registration fee to participate in the schools in the future.

EAACI and GA²LEN are dedicated to delivering several high-quality summer courses in the field of allergy every year. We are confident that each of you will find a course that is interesting. As the requirements of continuous medical education (CME) grow ever more demanding in Europe, attendance at a course will also give clinical doctors an opportunity to gain CME credits to complement credits received at the EAACI Annual Congress. For further information about EAACI/GA²LEN Summer School Courses, keep visiting the EAACI website at www.eaaci.net.

Jan Lötvall
EAACI Secretary General
EAACI/GA²LEN
Summer School Co-ordinator
The 2007 EAACI Congress in Göteborg, Sweden, will offer:

- Postgraduate courses on all aspects of allergy and immunology arranged on the Saturday, prior to the start of the scientific sessions (NEW!)
- Integrated plenary sessions
- Symposia on mechanistic and clinical aspects of asthma, allergy, and immunology
- Pro/con sessions on controversial topics
- Free communication, including oral presentations, poster sessions, and poster discussion
- “Meet the professor” breakfast seminars
- Corporate-sponsored symposia
- Special satellite symposia

New for EAACI 2007! We specifically invite clinicians to submit abstracts with:

- Case reports, observational studies (NEW!)
- Clinical experience (NEW!)
- New hypotheses (NEW!)

Very welcome to Göteborg!

Jan Lötvall
EAACI 2007 Congress President

www.congrex.com/eaaci2007