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Annual Congress of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI)

EAACI launches the Global Atlas of Allergy, developed by the top 170 opinion leaders worldwide

In some European countries, more than half of the population is already sensitized, while over 30% suffers from one or more allergic conditions

Allergy is a global public health concern of pandemic proportions that requires immediate action

The goal behind Global Atlas of Allergy is to highlight the burden of allergic diseases and provide a comprehensive platform for strategic planning for this condition in the format of

Copenhagen (Denmark), 9 June 2014 – Allergic diseases have become a major epidemic: in some countries, **more than half of the population is already sensitized, while more than 30% suffer from one or more allergic conditions**. Therefore, allergy today is a global public health concern of pandemic proportions that requires immediate action.

Faced with this situation, the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) called on all worldwide leaders to develop the *Global Atlas of Allergy* and the response has been very enthusiastic. The document was launched today during the 2014 EAACI Annual Congress.

Written by the top 170 opinion leaders, **the Atlas covers all aspects of allergic diseases from genetics, mechanisms, risk factors and epidemiology to diagnosis, treatment and prevention** and introduces **the new concept of a comprehensive global strategy** addressing the allergy epidemic, including the coordinated actions of schools, patient organisations, pharmacists, primary health care and allied health, together with a broad social mobilisation. Allergy and Active and Healthy Ageing and Allergy as part of the One Health Concept are discussed.

The objectives behind this document are broad:

- Gather evidence to highlight the burden of allergic diseases worldwide as being extensive enough to warrant recognition as a priority in national healthcare strategies
- Describe mechanisms and risk factors and evaluate the best methods for preventing and controlling allergic diseases
- Provide guidance on how to overcome barriers such as poverty, poor education and infrastructure, as well as low public health priority due to the importance of other illnesses and the lack of valid and reliable worldwide epidemiologic data
- Ensure that cost-effective management approaches, which have been proven to reduce morbidity and mortality, are available to as many people as possible who suffer from allergic diseases worldwide



- Establish an action plan to manage resources aimed at preventing allergic diseases as well as controlling and prioritising funding for allergy research

Better management of allergy for everybody

The document emphasizes the difficulties many developing countries face in managing allergic diseases mainly caused by insufficient levels of healthcare, heterogeneous inhabitation and a lack of educational programs for healthcare providers and patients.

Managing allergic diseases in developing countries depends also on the availability of essential drugs and their cost affordability. Only a few drugs used to treat allergic diseases are on the World Health Organization (WHO) essential drugs list, while allergen immunotherapy (the only intervention modifying the natural course of allergies) is listed as having limited accessibility.

In addition the need for an optimised allergy training and care is highlighted. Allergy training and allergy care is very heterogenous among European countries. Allergy as a full well recognized speciality, harmonised training and an uniform framework for managing allergic diseases is advocated along with Comprehensive multidisciplinary Allergy Centers coordinating optimal patient care and training of the health care professionals.

Heavy burden on healthcare systems

The *Global Atlas of Allergy* also describes the evolution of allergy over the years. During the last two centuries, allergy epidemics have characterized countries undergoing an epidemiological transition phase. Respiratory allergies appeared first among the richest, and then spread within the middle class and finally affected also the disadvantaged. Following a similar pattern, respiratory allergies and atopic eczema are on the rise nowadays in middle-income countries, especially in urban areas. More recently, food allergies are clearly becoming more prevalent in westernized populations. The increasing prevalence of food allergies is associated with fatal anaphylaxis in children and teenagers.

This “second wave” of the allergy epidemic is already creating **a heavy burden on healthcare systems that lack preparedness to face this new challenge.**

The editors of the “Global Atlas of Allergy” are: Professor Cezmi A. Akdis (Swiss Institute for Allergy and Asthma Research, University of Zurich), Christine Kuhne (Center for Allergy and Asthma Research, Davos, Switzerland) and Associate Professor Ioana Agache (Faculty of Medicine, Transylvania University Brasov, Romania).

About EAACI

The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, EAACI, is a non-profit organisation active in the field of allergic and immunologic diseases such as asthma, rhinitis, eczema, occupational allergy, food and drug allergy and anaphylaxis. EAACI was founded in 1956 in Florence and has become the largest medical association in Europe in the field of allergy and clinical immunology. It includes over 7,800 members from 121 countries, as well as 47 National Allergy Societies.



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REFERENCES

Data taken from *Global Atlas of Allergy*. European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) 2014