

# EDITORIAL

## ALLERGY AND ALLERGIC LUNG DISEASES – THE 2007 COMBINED CONGRESS



This edition of *Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology* has been produced to coincide with the combined congress of the Allergy Society of South Africa (ALLSA), the South African Thoracic Society and the South African Cystic Fibrosis Association in Cape Town, South Africa. The coming together of these three groups has allowed for a stimulating and full programme, many distinguished local and international faculty and diverse original research presentations. Although the three societies have distinct differences, we believe this combined congress also reflects many shared interests and values, extends the scope of the scientific programme and provides the chance to interact with colleagues from different disciplines. We are especially pleased to welcome the immunology subgroup of ALLSA who will be participating in the congress and holding a lunchtime meeting on Monday. While the congress has a strong focus on allergic respiratory diseases, the sessions cover a wide range of topics and include formal talks, case presentations, oral and poster original research presentations and industry-sponsored symposia. A special thank you to the ALLSA scientific committee (Mohamed Jeebhay, Sharon Kling, Andreas Lopata, Paul Potter, Allan Puterman) who spent many hours helping to put together this programme.

This edition of the journal contains the abstracts of the ALLSA original research presentations as well as a number of cutting edge papers, some of which will be presented during sessions at the congress. Angela Simpson and Adnan Custovic (one of the ALLSA invited overseas faculty) in a fascinating paper, discuss gene-environment interactions in the development of asthma. This article postulates that the rise in asthma prevalence observed in the last 50 years results from environmental factors increasing the risk in genetically susceptible individuals mediated via gene-environment interactions. Hugo Neffen, another of the overseas speakers invited by ALLSA, addresses the high prevalence of asthma in Latin America as measured by the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood (ISAAC) study and associated risk factors. He further highlights the substantial morbidity with the majority of patients not receiving appropriate diagnosis,

therapy or monitoring, and failing to achieve the goals for asthma control as described in the recently revised GINA guidelines. For the latest local information on asthma epidemiology, please come to the symposium on the epidemiology of asthma and allergies in the southern hemisphere on the opening day of the congress. George du Toit and Adam Fox discuss the use and risks of oral food challenges which are the gold standard for diagnosis of food allergy, but are often not used because of technical difficulties and safety concerns. In a second comprehensive review, they discuss the safety and efficacy of sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT) in children with allergic rhinitis – a relatively new method of inducing immunological tolerance to allergens. They conclude that SLIT may be indicated in children with severe allergic rhinitis, where there is an identifiable allergen. This subject will be further discussed by Jean Bousquet, one of the invited South African Thoracic Society overseas speakers in the “Hot topics in allergy” session during the congress.

The journal also contains our regular features. ABC of Allergology contributed by the section editor, Adrian Morris, focuses on the interesting entity of idiopathic environmental intolerance. This is a chronic, recurring disease triggered by many unrelated chemicals. Allergic symptoms occur in multiple organs, attributable to chronic prolonged, low-dose environmental chemical exposure. For the allergies in the workplace section, Lerato Maiphethlo has contributed an interesting case report of a machinist who developed contact dermatitis while working for many years in the textile industry. This article highlights the importance of a detailed work history and need for understanding of occupational processes and exposures in any patient presenting with dermatitis. The clinical images section, showing the methodology and possible complications of oral food challenge, complements the accompanying article on this procedure for diagnosis of food allergy. The skin focus feature, contributed by the section editor Mohamed Docrat, reviews the ichthyosiform dermatoses. As shown in the excellent photographs, these mostly inherited disorders are characterised by an accumulation of cutaneous scales.

We welcome you to Cape Town and hope that you will find this edition of the journal stimulating. Wishing you a very enjoyable conference and a wonderful stay in Cape Town.

**Prof Heather J Zar**  
*Congress Co-chair and Editor*

**Prof Eugene G Weinberg**  
*Editor*