

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



The Guest Editor of this edition of *Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology* is Professor Paul Potter, the journal's Founding Editor. It is fitting that he should edit the issue to be distributed at the World Allergy Congress in Bangkok, and I would like to congratulate him and his contributors on the excellent articles contained in this journal. To those of you reading our journal at

the congress, I hope you enjoy the articles and I wish you a most enjoyable and instructive meeting!

Unbelievably the first year in the life of the 'new' ALLSA Excom is over! In this report I would like to review our activities over the past year, and briefly set out our plans for the next year.

Congresses

We took office at the time of the wonderful 'ALL 4 KIDS' Congress at Sun City in September 2006 and we had already committed to a combined congress with the SA Thoracic Society in March 2007 in Cape Town. At the time it felt very close to the previous congress, but thanks to Heather Zar and her organising and scientific committees it was a resounding success. Thank you to all the researchers for sharing your work with us at both congresses. At the Cape Town congress Professor Eugene Weinberg was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Allergy Society of SA for his outstanding contribution to allergy in SA.

Annual General Meeting

As the Congress predated the end of our financial year we were unable to hold the AGM there, and it was held in Cape Town in conjunction with the ALLSA journal club meeting on 19 September. At this meeting the membership supported the Excom initiative to draw up a Governance Charter for the Allergy Society. We are about to have our third meeting with Dr Tom Sutcliffe who is assisting us with drawing up the Charter, which would be an addendum to our Constitution. The aim of the Charter is to ensure that the processes within our Society are defensible and open to scrutiny.

Journal

Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology continues to deliver articles of a high standard. At a meeting of the Colleges of Medicine last week a physician from the University of KwaZulu-Natal commented on the superb quality of the articles and the production. Needless to say, I felt extremely proud of the ALLSA flagship! The past year has continued the high standard, and I not only want to thank the hardworking editors and production team, but also the guest editors, the regular section editors, and the contributors. The journal is the lifeblood of ALLSA, and also makes a very important contribution to allergy and clinical immunology in South Africa. A new section on case studies, edited by Professor Cas Motala, makes its debut in this issue. The journal editions for 2008 have already been planned, and promise to be very interesting. Congratulations and heartfelt thanks to Professors

Heather Zar and Eugene Weinberg, Anne Hahn and Ruwayda Adams for their continuing excellent work.

Education and training

Robin Green has taken over this portfolio and has put a tremendous amount of effort and enthusiasm into it. He has encouraged a number of doctors in Pretoria to develop an interest in allergy, and the last two Diploma in Allergology examinations have added six new diplomates, all from Pretoria. Congratulations to Alta Terblanche, Marilee Kriel and Carien Murray (May 2007) and Thaneshvari (Theshni) Moodley, Nanditha Bhagwan and Omolemo Kitchin (October 2007) on successfully completing this examination. Congratulations to Tammy Urquhart as the second recipient of the Eugene Weinberg Medal! At the last examination Tammy Urquhart and Gloria Davis were first-time examiners. Thank you to all the conveners and examiners for ensuring that the Diploma remains a high-quality qualification.

Congratulations to Theshni Moodley who has been awarded a WAO/Nycomed Fellowship! She will train in Cape Town and will also attend the WAO congress in Bangkok.

A successful Allergy Masterclass was held in Durban in August, and was well attended. Thanks to Ahmed Manjra and Ruwayda Adams for their excellent organisation.

Membership services and website

Di Hawarden and Ruwayda Adams have put a great deal of effort into improving communication with our membership, and the award-winning website has also been updated. It is an excellent resource for anyone requiring allergy information.

Policy and advocacy

World Asthma Day on 1 May was again co-ordinated by Mike Levin, assisted by Lynne Zurnamer of Oz Consulting. ALLSA joined NAEP and SATS to publicise asthma, and the many events were well supported countrywide.

ALLSA has contributed funds towards the Asthma Guidelines Implementation Project (AGIP) under the supervision of Professor Bob Mash and Sr Hilary Rhode. I have seen some of the material that they have produced, and it looks excellent!

There has been a flood of unconventional allergy testing recently, and I would like to express my sincere thanks to Harris Steinman for his efforts and the time he has spent trying to educate professionals and the public. Andrew Halkas and his subcommittee are in the process of preparing position statements to be placed on the ALLSA website.

Research

Thanks to generous awards from GlaxoSmithKline, UCB, MSD and Cipla Medpro we are in the happy position of being able to offer substantial awards for research into allergy and asthma. We are trying to promote new researchers, both by means of research awards and using travel grants to our congresses. The

research awards will be announced this year and the recipients will receive their certificates at the Sun City congress next year. Thanks to Mohamed Jeebhay and his committee for their dedicated hard work.

Financial

The financial subcommittee ensures that ALLSA retains its PBO and NPO status, while trying hard to help the Society to become self-sufficient. Thanks to Di Hawarden, Cas Motala, Mohamed Jeebhay, Heather Zar and Matt Haus.

Special congratulations

Special congratulations to Heather Zar (Full Professor at UCT and the extremely prestigious UCT Fellowship) and Paul Potter (Full Professor at UCT, Head of Allergology)! We are extremely proud of both of you!

The future

Paul Potter is currently spearheading the drive to get allergy registered as a subspecialty in South Africa, and we thank him for the tremendous amount of work he has put into this effort. ALLSA supports this initiative and the current Excom sees this as our major strategic goal for this triennium.

Our next congress, *The Sky's the Limit*, will be held at Sun City from 29 May to 1 June 2008, and will be a combined one with the SA Paediatric Association. This congress coincides with ALLSA's 20th anniversary, and the state-of-the-art programme promises to be of an extremely high standard, while simultaneously commemorating the past 20 years of allergy in SA. A pre-congress workshop on occupational and practical allergy is a must-attend!

As the end of 2007 approaches, I would like to thank all our members for your loyal support, the Excom for your hard work, and our friends and colleagues in the pharmaceutical industry. The support of the industry for ALLSA at our congresses, for our research and CME activities, and for our journal is sincerely appreciated. Thank you to Ruwayda Adams, Anne Hahn and Jean Aprill for your continuing outstanding contribution to ALLSA.

I wish you all a peaceful and restful holiday season! I look forward to seeing many of you in Sun City next year!

Sharon Kling
Chairman

PRODUCT NEWS

PIMECROLIMUS CREAM 1% IN ATOPIC DERMATITIS: A 6-MONTH, OPEN-LABEL TRIAL IN PAEDIATRIC PATIENTS

Pimecrolimus, a new, non-steroid, inflammatory-cytokine inhibitor, has been shown to prevent progression to flare in atopic dermatitis (AD) and to improve long-term disease control when applied as a 1% cream. In this 6-month, open-label, multinational study, 177 infants aged 3-23 months and 489 children aged 2-17 years, with mild to severe AD, were included. The study was designed to evaluate the efficacy and safety of pimecrolimus cream 1% used as a first-line treatment. Treatment consisted of an initial bid regimen, for as long as signs and symptoms of disease persisted; this was followed by treatment as required at the first signs and symptoms of AD. Emollients were allowed as per the physician's normal practice, and topical corticosteroids could be used to treat severe flares at the discretion of the physician. Efficacy was assessed by evaluations of pruritus, and total-body and facial Investigators' Global Assessment (IGA). Results from the first return visit (day 7) showed an improvement from baseline of ≥ 1 in total-body and facial IGA for infants (59.1% and 72.8% of patients, respectively) and children (59.3% and 62.2%, respectively). Pruritus was absent or mild in 67.8% and 65.4% of infants and children, respec-

tively. This level of improvement in the patient population was maintained throughout the 6-month study. Adverse events occurred in 75.7% of infants and 71.1% of children. Most adverse events were common childhood illnesses that would be expected in this population (e.g. nasopharyngitis (infants 22.0%, children 12.8%), upper respiratory tract infection (infants 18.6%, children 11.9%) and cough (infants 8.5%, children 10.1%)). Concerning pimecrolimus's local tolerability, application-site burning occurred in 2.3% of infants and 7.0% of children, and local pruritus occurred in 0.6% infants and 1.0% children. Application-site reactions were most frequently reported during the first 6 weeks of treatment and were mild to moderate in intensity. In conclusion, pimecrolimus cream 1% was effective in the treatment of the early signs and symptoms of AD (including pruritus) in infants and children, and demonstrated a good safety profile.

Reference available on request. Contact Thoko Nzama, 011-929-9111

