

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



It is hard to believe that the triennium of the current ALLSA Excom has already come to an end. I clearly remember the wonderful 2006 congress at Sun City, during which I was elected chairman. I was overwhelmed at the privilege and by the trust placed in me, and this feeling continues to this day.

It is an honour to have been ALLSA Chair during the 20th year and now the 'coming of age' of our organisation. The Allergy Society of South Africa was established by very visionary people in 1988, and it is fitting that, 21 years on, we are on the brink of having our first subspecialists registered and will be embarking on subspecialist training. What is also unique about this is that allergology will be based not only on paediatrics and internal medicine, but also on family medicine. I would like to pay tribute to our founder members, to the Excoms through the years, to the Journal editors and contributors, to all our loyal members, and to our office and support staff.

I believe that the last 3 years have been watershed years in our Society, and would like to briefly discuss the highlights. I have to point out that our achievements have built on the legacy of past Excoms and have also involved considerable work and input from ALLSA members working outside the Excom.

## Allergology Subspecialist Registration

There is no doubt that the greatest achievement of this Society is the recognition of allergology as a subspecialty. The most recent hard work was done by Paul Potter and Cas Motala, but many years ago the ground work was laid by Eugene Weinberg, Paul Potter, Cas Motala and Matt Haus. We managed to build on this and achieved recognition of the Diploma in Allergology. I believe that the popularity of this diploma has contributed to academic allergology, and I wish to pay tribute to Matt Haus and Bruce Sparks for helping us to get it through the Colleges of Medicine and subsequently through the HPCSA. The groundswell of support and the excellent training programme at Red Cross Children's Hospital resulted in allergy spreading around the country. We now have centres of excellence in Gauteng (Steve Biko Academic Hospital and Pretoria University – Robin Green) and KwaZulu-Natal (Ahmed Manjra) in addition to the ongoing expertise in Cape Town.

## Governance Charter

ALLSA has taken the lead in establishing a Governance Charter for the Society. Cas Motala and Tom Sutcliffe devoted many hours to this document, which I think is an excellent addition to the Constitution and which will continue to guide us in matters of governance. The current Excom all contributed ideas and suggestions, and it will be available to members at the Durban Congress for perusal and comment.

## ALLSA Position Statements

This Excom has been brave in promoting 'good allergy practice' and putting position statements on the ALLSA website. We have come in for a fair amount of criticism

as a result, but I think it is in line with our stated Vision and Mission for the Society. Thank you to the expert ALLSA members who assisted in drafting these position statements.

## Subcommittees and portfolios

I will now give brief report backs on the activities of the various subcommittees and portfolios of the ALLSA Excom.

### *Membership and website*

Our membership has remained reasonably steady, and we have some ideas to recruit young members from universities. The award-winning website is excellent – thanks to Di Hawarden, Ruwayda Adams and Daniel Braude for all their hard work.

### *Research*

Mohamed Jeebhay (Chair), Cas Motala and Heather Zar have implemented innovative changes to the application and assessment processes of the research awards. Some outstanding projects have been funded by ALLSA grants, and we anticipate feedback at congresses and as reports in the Journal.

### *Education*

Robin Green has spearheaded a number of initiatives, including a series of lectures in allergy in Gauteng, and promoting the Diploma in Allergology among paediatricians and registrars. He has organised the Diploma examination panels very efficiently, and has involved new examiners in the past few examinations.

We have had three outstanding congresses over the past years: one combined with the South African Thoracic Society and two combined with the South African Paediatric Association. In all three, our members made excellent contributions to the science and the social events, we had high calibre international speakers, and brilliant local faculty. The international speakers were Gideon Lack (UK), Mike Kaliner and Allen Kaplan (USA) in 2006, Jean Bousquet (France), Andrew Bush and Adnan Custovic (UK), Hugo Neffen (Argentina), Søren Pedersen (Denmark) and Andrea Apter (USA) in 2007, and Tom Platts-Mills (USA) and Susan Prescott (Australia) in 2008. This year's congress will host Estelle Simons (Canada) and George du Toit (ex SA, now in the UK) as the guest speakers.

The newest initiative is a comprehensive update of the *Handbook of Allergy*, with Cas Motala and Paul Potter as co-editors.

### *Policy and Advocacy*

This subcommittee, ably led by Andrew Halkas, has been involved in establishing guidelines for our interaction and relationship with health care funders. The most recent initiatives involve prescribed minimum benefits for treatment of asthma in children and guidelines for appropriate allergy testing.

Harris Steinman is ALLSA's representative on FLAG, but he is also a major advocate for honest advertising and does not shy away from difficult situations – for this we thank him.

Our Childhood Asthma Guidelines are being finalised as I write this, and will be presented at the congress. Thank you to Cas for driving the process and to all the contributors for your hard work.

### *Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology*

Heather Zar, Eugene Weinberg and Anne Hahn have continued to produce an outstanding Journal that carries both review articles and original allergy research. It is an excellent resource, and has received international as well as national acclaim. The Editors have been prepared to be innovative in terms of content and presentation, and for this we laud them.

### *International*

Cas Motala served South Africa, Africa and World Allergy in an exemplary fashion as a Director on the WAO Board, and for this we thank him. He has been succeeded by Paul Potter, who has already contributed to a number of WAO position papers and who we know will continue to represent allergy in South Africa in his usual inimitable fashion. Heather Zar was a member of the GINA Panel that developed the most recent guidelines for management of asthma in children under the age of 5 years.

We would also like to thank the World Allergy Organisation for their support of our congresses, by sponsoring speakers and/or GLORIA symposia.

### *Conclusion*

I look back over the last 3 years with pride, yet with a deep sense of humility and gratitude. I have worked with the most amazing Executive Committee and ALLSA office staff. We have experienced some incredibly difficult problems and have dealt with unpleasant situations, yet I could always call on the wisdom and support of the Excom members. Cas continues to be a wise head and a major guiding hand, and I have to single him out for special thanks.

I also want to thank Heather Zar for her tireless work for ALLSA. Heather is not standing for re-election, and we will miss her input on the Excom, but she will continue to co-edit the Journal, and we look forward to working with her in her new capacity of President of the South African Thoracic Society.

Our congresses were successful for several reasons, but I have to thank the organising and scientific com-

mittees, and also the UCT Conference Management Centre and Sue McGuinness Communications and Event Management. In particular, Sue McGuinness brings a particular brand of professionalism and expertise to congress and event management that will prove hard to surpass, and the organisational and financial success of these events are in no small measure due to her. Our last congress coincided with a very difficult time for her, and we really appreciate the manner in which she handled everything.

Ahmed Manjra, the lone ranger in Durban, has done it again – a wonderful congress with an excellent scientific programme – thanks, Ahmed.

Ruwayda Adams – how do I even begin to thank her? The smoothly purring engine of the ALLSA machine ensures the seamless running of the Society. She has been ably assisted by Shahnaz Arnold, and the always-friendly Jean Aprill keeps the office organised. Anne Hahn continues to do the most brilliant production editorial work on the Journal. Thank you to all of you.

And last, but certainly not least, our partners in the pharmaceutical and medical device industry deserve our heartfelt thanks. It has been their support that has enabled us to further allergy research in South Africa (GlaxoSmithKline, UCB, MSD and Cipla), organise congresses, run workshops, publish the Journal, and provide patient information sheets. We acknowledge the governance and economic restraints under which they operate and we wish to ensure them that we appreciate their help, support and friendship.

Lastly, the ALLSA Excom appreciates that the majority of our membership base is in Gauteng. We wish to thank our loyal members and assure those outside the Western Cape that we are looking at ways of ensuring access to allergy journals and other resources for them.

I want to wish you all a wonderful ALLSA Congress in Durban. Enjoy the scientific content as well as the social events and the networking, and take time to explore the wonderful city.

To the incoming ALLSA Chairman and Excom: I wish you all the best for a very enjoyable and successful triennium!

Sharon Kling  
*Chairman*

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