

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



This year is the last year in office for the present committee and it is appropriate to review some of our achievements for the last 3 years. The Excom consists of 10 members of whom 6 were elected, 3 co-opted and the past chairman. The elected members were Paul Potter, Cas Motala, Sharon Kling, Heather Zar, John Steer and myself. The co-opted members were André van Niekerk, Andrew Halkas and Steve Lee. Matt Haus was the past chairman of the society. This Excom has worked tirelessly in the past 3 years to promote the aims and objectives of the society.

Sharon Kling together with Matt Haus was instrumental in the creation of the Diploma in Allergology. The exams for the diploma have just been conducted and all five candidates have passed. The exams were well organised, and were of an exceptionally high standard. They consisted of two written papers, an OSCE, clinical examination and viva. The oral exams were conducted at the Lung Institute in Cape Town. In April this year we conducted an intensive course in allergology to prepare candidates for the exam. Seventeen candidates from around the country attended this. I certainly feel that this development is the most important milestone in the history of the society and will ensure the growth of allergology as an important discipline in medicine in this country. The allergy fraternity in South Africa is a very small one and I feel confident the diploma will give impetus to the growth of the society.

Cas Motala has been the treasurer of the society for the past 6 years. Our finances are in very healthy situation thanks to the meticulous work done by Cas. Our major source of income, which sustains the society, has been the revenue generated by the journal and our congresses. We now intend to invest some of these monies to ensure the financial viability of the society. Cas and his team are currently examining some of the investment options available to the society. I am confident that the new committee will be inheriting a financially sound and well-structured treasury.

Paul Potter has been responsible for the allocation of the research awards that are granted to the society by GlaxoSmithKline and UCB Pharma. Every year these awards are allocated at our congresses and Paul has discharged this responsibility very ethically and meticulously. He has put together an excellent infrastructure to ensure that these awards are granted to support research that is relevant to the needs of South Africa. We also thank GlaxoSmithKline and UCB Pharma for all the support that they have given to the society to promote research in allergology in South Africa.

Heather Zar and Eugene Weinberg have been the editors of this journal for the past 3 years and will continue for the next term. They have maintained a very high academic standard that was initiated by Paul Potter. They have introduced a peer review system and intend promoting the journal across Africa. We hope that Eugene Weinberg will continue playing an instrumental role in shaping the future of the journal despite his retirement.

André van Niekerk and Andrew Halkas, our Gauteng representatives, were involved in the organisation of the congress last year. They have done a superb job in promoting interest in the society in Gauteng.

Matt Haus and John Steer have been very important members of the Excom and have played a crucial role at the Excom meetings in helping resolve critical issues. Their wisdom and insight have been instrumental in ensuring the success of the society.

This year we have joined the Thoracic Society and Critical Care Society in organising a joint congress in Cape Town. This congress highlights the close working relationship that ALLSA enjoys with other societies. This promises to be an exciting meeting and we would like to encourage all our members to attend.

This year World Asthma Day on 6 May was also observed in South Africa. We organised a joint campaign with the National Asthma Education Programme. This involved media briefings, radio interviews, and press releases. All the major national and regional radio stations as well as many of the newspapers promoted this campaign. This again highlights ALLSA's commitment to working closely with other societies that share a similar interest.

ALLSA is jointly organising the Asthma for Africa congress in Durban with NAEP in October this year. This is an update programme for primary health care workers. This demonstrates ALLSA's willingness to work with other societies sharing common interests.

ALLSA is affiliated to the World Allergy Organization (WAO) and we will be represented at the next meeting to be held in Vancouver in September this year. ALLSA has two representatives in the House of Delegates of the WAO based on our membership. This grants us voting rights on important issues regarding policies of the WAO.

The last 3 years have been busy but fruitful years for the society. It was a period in which the society experienced the largest growth in membership, revenue and activities. Congresses, which were previously held every 2 years, are now held yearly because of the demand for such meetings. We have allocated more funds for research every year and we have also introduced a higher examination in allergology.

I would like to thank my committee for their hard work, dedication, commitment and support and wish the incoming committee all the best in the future.

Ahmed Manjra