

## History of the World Allergy Organization: The Emerging Societies Program (ESP)

Constance H. Katelaris, MB, BS, PhD, FRACP

*History of the World Allergy Organization: In 1951, the leaders in allergy from all over the world came together to form the International Association of Allergology and Clinical Immunology (IAACI). For the next 60 years, the allergy world converged at the IAACI triennial meetings, which became biennial in 2003. The international meetings, originally named the International Congress of Allergology and Clinical Immunology, are now the World Allergy Congress hosted by the World Allergy Organization (WAO). Everyone who has aspired to have worldwide recognition has played a part in IAACI-WAO. The History of the WAO traces the global arc of the allergy field over the past 60 years.*

*The current officers of WAO elected to focus on this rich history, inviting prominent leaders who are interested in being part of this history project to write about their time with IAACI-WAO. This series will be presented in Cancún, México as part of the XXII World Allergy Congress (December 4–8, 2011). Leading up to the Congress in Cancún, the WAO Journal is presenting segments of the History as part of the "Notes of Allergy Watchers Series." Please enjoy.*

—Michael A. Kaliner, MD  
Historian, and Past-President (2006–2007)  
World Allergy Organization

High on a snowy mountain in Patagonia in 2001, I had a memorable conversation with Dr Bob Lanier. I had formed the concept of an "emerging societies group" for the World Allergy Organization (WAO). The Executive Committee had been discussing how best to expand the organization, serve the needs of its members, and more importantly, to meet the needs of people with allergic disorders. We realized that membership could only be via national organizations, yet in many countries the discipline of Allergy/Immunology was not recognized and there were no national organizations. We needed to reach out to these colleagues and to offer support and encouragement to form allergy organizations. It was clear that there were many regions that needed assistance with funding, educational endeavors and resources if they were to be empowered to cope with the allergy epidemic that was having an impact in the developing world as well.

From the Department of Allergy and Immunology, University of Western Sydney and Campbelltown Hospital, Australia.

Correspondence to: Constance H. Katelaris, MB, BS, PhD, FRACP, Professor of Allergy and Immunology, Department of Medicine, Immunology & Allergy Unit, University of Western Sydney and Campbelltown Hospital, Therry Rd Campbelltown 2560 NSW Australia.

Telephone: 61246344002. Fax: 61296334108. E-mail: connie.katelaris@sswahs.gov.nsw.au.

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Dr Lanier was coming into his presidency of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) and had had similar ideas for how best ACAAI could assist colleagues, particularly in Asia, where ACAAI had outreach activities. We each saw in the other a similar vision and a like-minded attitude to many things and started a friendship that is firm to this day. It was here that the plan for the Emerging Societies Meetings (ESM, later to be renamed Emerging Societies Program, ESP) was conceived. The ACAAI and WAO formed a partnership, both financial and collegiate, to run the program that has been so successful for world allergy.

The ESM became the collaborative effort of WAO and ACAAI to expand and improve the specialty of allergy worldwide; to create relationships with future WAO Member Societies, and to facilitate understanding of challenges and opportunities faced by colleagues in developing countries.

The first meeting was to target the Asian countries without established Allergy/Immunology societies. We felt strongly that the Asia Pacific Association of Allergy Asthma and Immunology (APAAACI) should be involved in this work so we invited Prof. Ron Walls, the President of APAAACI, to be in attendance at the first planning meeting, which was held during the 2002 annual meeting of the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI) in New York. We planned to have the first ESM precede the APCAAACI annual meeting to be held in South Korea in October 2002.

Our aim was to bring together specialists in the field of Allergy/Clinical Immunology from countries without formal networks within the specialty for discussions on management or organizational matters and to enable them to participate in the scientific meeting.

Our objectives for participants were to:

- Meet and liaise with representatives of global and regional societies.
- Enumerate areas where assistance was required to further the specialty in their region.

For the national, regional and global organizations, ACAAI, APAAACI, and WAO, the objectives were to:

- Meet and get to know physicians in countries without formal societies.
- Establish the most useful forms of assistance that could be channeled through key people.
- Lend support for educational or training programs especially using the newly created GLORIA (Global Re-

sources in Allergy and Immunology) educational program that WAO had launched in 2001.

Our first representatives were Drs Gobinda Das (Bangladesh), Ros Prack Ponlu (Cambodia), Sonomjamts Munkhbayarlakh (Mongolia), Kyan Aung (Myanmar), Anura Weerasinge (Sri Lanka), Shahid Abbas (Pakistan), Mohammad Osman Yusuf (Pakistan), all of whom have remained active in the specialty and have contributed to the organization in many ways.

At that first meeting many needs were identified including the need for basic allergen extracts for skin testing, the need for allergen identification assistance, basic allergy training in many of the countries represented and the need for more engagement and communication. From this we set up an Asian Aeroallergen group, purchased a Burkard pollen trap for allergen identification, prepared an operator's manual and work book to ensure best, standardized practice and planned our first aeroallergen working group meeting. The first trap was placed in Pakistan, and it has led to presentation of data at subsequent WAO meetings.

The second ESM was held in 2003 in St. Petersburg, where language barriers to using educational materials were identified as a major issue and the lack of standardized allergen identification for the various regions. As a result, more pollen traps were purchased, allergen surveys were commenced and Russian translation of WAO educational materials was commenced. Further meetings followed in Tokyo (2004), Malaysia (2006), Latin America (2006), Mexico (2007), China (2007), and Bangkok (2007).

By the time my term came to an end in December 2007 we had achieved a network of colleagues in regions previously untapped by WAO; created opportunities for ESP

colleagues to attend meetings and network with allergists from developed countries; gained more national members for WAO; established the Asian Aeroallergen Working Group (AAWG) of WAO, funded 3 pollen traps and created a training manual; commenced allergen surveys in Pakistan and in regions of the Commonwealth of Independent States; had the journal of the WAO translated into Russian; commenced partnerships that we hoped would result in the sustainability of the ESP and established and expanded Web-based opportunities for learning or teaching.

This remarkable amount of work and the many achievements were only possible because of the commitment and belief in the project given by the 2 presidents who spanned this time of growth, Drs Allen Kaplan and Michael Kaliner; by the unflinching support, dedication, and leadership of Bob Lanier and by the financial and philosophical commitment of a number of ACAAI presidents with whom I had the privilege of working, Drs William Berger, Michael Blaiss, Myron Zitt, William Dolen, Jay Portnoy, and Daniel Ein. Finally, without the support and logistical expertise of the WAO Secretariat (in particular, Gail Bast and Karen Henley) none of this would have happened!

The ESP since 2007 has been continuing the mission of supporting developments that will enable allergists to better serve patients in the future by disseminating information and sharing experiences about now treatments for allergic disease and new indications for available therapies with programs held in Venezuela (2008), United Arab Emirates (2009, 2010), Vietnam (2010), and Brazil (2010). More information about the ESP can be found at <http://www.worldallergy.org/esp/>.