

History of the World Allergy Organization: X International Allergy and Clinical Immunology Congress—Jerusalem

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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 (ICACI), are now the World Allergy Congress (WAC) 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 World Allergy Organization 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 was presented in Cancún, México as part of the XXII World Allergy Congress (December 4–8, 2011). The World Allergy Organization 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

The Israel Society of Allergy (ISA), which was founded in 1949 and comprised of only 12 active members (nowadays there are 75 Board Certified Physicians), was one of the few national allergy organizations involved in establishing the International Association of Allergology (IAA). At the first congress convened in Zurich (1951), the ISA was represented by its Chairman, Dr M. I. Guttmann of Jerusalem, and Dr Nathan Lass of Tel Aviv, the Secretary-Treasurer. Members of ISA were active in major allergy organizations, such as the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology and The American College of Allergy Asthma and Immunology, and regional

organizations, such as the European Academy of Allergy Asthma and Clinical Immunology.

During the early days of the State of Israel, there were severe restrictions on the use of foreign currency, thus limiting our ability to travel abroad. I do not recall if any Israeli attended the second congress (1955) in Sao Paulo (Brazil). At the third congress in Paris (1958), we were at least 5 from Israel, all presenting papers. It was my privilege to attend all the triennial congresses since 1958 (Paris) until 2005 (Munich).

At the congress in Montreal (1967), as the official delegate of ISA, it was my pleasure to present for the first time our invitation to hold a congress in Israel. I was elected to serve on the Executive Committee of the International Association of Allergology and advanced to position of First Vice President. After the Jerusalem congress, I served as Treasurer for 2 terms.

In 1967, we hosted the biannual symposium of the Collegium Internationale Allergologicum in Tel Aviv and Rehovot. After the seventh IAA Congress in Florence, a satellite conference was organized in Tel Aviv, Arad, and Jerusalem. All these international medical events in Israel provided us with invaluable practical experience in preparation for the Jerusalem Congress.

At the eighth congress in October 1973 in Japan, while the Yom Kippur war was still going on in and around Israel, it was decided to hold the 10th congress in 1979 in Israel. The ninth Congress in Buenos Aires (1976) happened shortly after the military takeover in Argentina, and therefore, it was very poorly attended and ran into great financial difficulties. Doubts were raised about the congress in Israel, but the support of Prof. Alain deWeck, Treasurer of the IAA at the time, and the commitment of Mr Gideon Rivlin, President of Kenes—Organizers of Congresses and Special Events Ltd—made it possible. In appreciation of Prof. deWeck’s contributions to the congress and his long-standing interest of Allergy and Immunology in Israel, he was elected Honorary Member of the Israel Association. The certificate was presented at the 14th World Asthma Congress in Jerusalem (1993).

The X International Congress of Allergy, November 4–11, 1979, was held in Jerusalem, Israel. The organizing committee was led by Dr Israel Glazer (Chair), Dr Nathan Lass (Co-chair), Prof. Edgar Pick (Secretary), and Mrs Eliakima Glazer (Social Activities).

The IAA and the organizers were proud and grateful that His Excellency, the President of Israel, Mr Yitzhak Navon, granted his patronage to this international event (Fig. 1). The Congress was held in the capital, Jerusalem, which is blessed by historical, cultural, and religious heritages. The venue was

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FIGURE 1. Mrs Eliakima Glazer and Dr Israel Glazer welcoming Mr Yitzhak Navon, President of the State of Israel, to the Convention Center.

the newly enlarged and renovated Jerusalem Congress Center where Eurovision—the lavish European Song Contest—was held. The attendance was more than expected, and it created a substantial income for the IAA, which was enough to cover the deficit incurred in Buenos Aires.

The opening ceremony was attended by more than 2000 people. Prof. Enrique Mathov remarked that the congress in Jerusalem was one of the best attended in the history of the association. As a matter of fact, it was the largest medical congress ever held in Israel by that time. The President of Israel delivered an inspiring speech, which was accepted by a standing ovation. The ceremony was concluded by a multimedia projection about Israel, a folk dance performance, and a lavish reception and dinner offered by the municipality of Jerusalem (Fig. 2).

The widespread availability of facsimile international transmission was utilized for the first time in the management of the congress and especially in preparing the scientific



FIGURE 3. Mrs Aliza Begin, wife of Prime Minister Menachem Begin, being welcomed as the guest of honor at the ladies' reception and fashion show.

program and publication of the proceedings of the congress (Pergamon Press, 795 pages).

The congress was held at a time during which great steps were made in Immunology concerning allergic phenomena and the management of allergic diseases. This was reflected in the extensive scientific program. The Scientific Program Committee comprised: E. Mathov (Chairman), C. E. Arbesman (Cochairman), O. Thomas, J. Brostoff, J. Benveniste, I. Morrison, A. L. de Weck, L. C. Jager, I. Glazer, and J. Croce. There were 15 major symposia where more than 80 invited outstanding world authorities presented their most recent contributions. In addition, there were 368 free communications in 38 sessions. This scope and size surpassed all previous congresses and posed a great organizational burden. A significant international cooperation was achieved mainly in the work of the specific committees such as Standardization, Environment, Training, and Specialization.



FIGURE 2. The head table at the opening ceremony (left to right): Prof. Alain deWeck, IAA Treasurer; unidentified; Dr Ram Ishay, President of the Israel Medical Association; Prof. Enrique Matov, IAA President; Mr Yitzhak Navon, President of the State of Israel; Dr Israel Glazer, Chairman of the Organizing Committee and President of the Israel Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology; Prof. Carl Arbesman, IAA President-Elect; Prof. Baruch Modan, Director General of the Israel Ministry of Health; Mr Yitzhak Unna, Special Advisor to the Mayor of Jerusalem; and Prof. Edgar Pick, Secretary of the Organizing Committee.

The trend of national allergy organizations, especially in the United States, in the 1960s and 1970s was to expand to incorporate Clinical Immunology. In Israel, this happened in 1980, thus forming the Israel Association of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. It was at the House of Delegates of the International Association of Allergology meeting in Jerusalem that the name was changed to International Association of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (IAACI). This was some years later to be changed to World Allergy Organization.

The Social Program provided free tickets to the Israel Museum and several guided walking tours of the old city of Jerusalem, as well as shuttle buses from the hotels to the Convention Center and back. Other bus tours were available

for different sights of the Holy Land. A special program for the ladies, including a fashion show, was offered (Fig. 3).

At the closing banquet, the Honorary Awards of the IAACI were presented as follows: Distinguished Service Award: M. W. Chase and R. P. Orange (awarded posthumously). Henry Hide Salter Clinical Award: S. C. Bukantz, F. C. Lowell, and W. J. Quarles van Ufford. IAACI Achievement Award: A. L. deWeck, L. L. Henderson, and T. Sindo. The banquet dinner was accompanied by spiritual Jewish tunes (clarinet) and a dancing band.

The success of the Jerusalem congress did put the ISA and many of its members on the global allergy map for many decades to come.