



THE WORLD ALLERGY ORGANIZATION

The World Allergy Organization (WAO; www.worldallergy.org) is the global alliance of 77 regional and national allergology and clinical immunology societies from around the world. The mission of the Organization is to be a global resource and advocate in the field of allergy, advancing excellence in clinical care through education, research and training as a world-wide alliance of allergy and clinical immunology societies.

A WAO Survey conducted in 2004 completed by 33 national Member Societies suggested that between the countries represented by the Member Societies there were approximately 16,000 trained allergists, and approximately 1.39 billion individuals with allergy. Clearly, there are not enough trained allergists to diagnose and treat the current number of patients with allergy. This shortage of providers is compounded by the fact that in many highly industrialized countries, the rising costs of health care have dictated a reduction in the specialty care provided by allergists, while in many underserved countries infectious diseases utilize the majority of health care resources. Many patients with allergies are treated by physicians who have had an extremely limited exposure to allergy diagnosis and treatment during their medical school and postgraduate training.

The WAO is in a unique position to synthesize best allergy practices developed by long-established allergy societies and to disseminate the knowledge gained throughout diverse geographic regions, sharing relevant experience with Member Societies in countries where allergy is a developing specialty, and to reach out to allergists and other healthcare professionals worldwide. In collaboration with its Member Societies, the WAO provides direct educational outreach programs, specialty development programs, symposia, and lectureships to members in 92 countries.

In partnership with other allergy societies around the world WAO has developed three position papers addressing the need for healthcare professional training in allergy. The first position paper defines what an allergist is, and the second delineates the training required for physicians at all levels of training and specialization to competently care for allergy patients. The third position paper proposes the content of undergraduate training programs in allergy to ensure that medical students graduate with a baseline understanding of allergic disease, enabling them to manage simple cases of allergy and recognize the more complex cases that need to be referred for specialist care.

WAO is developing advanced educational programs to teach allergy diagnosis and treatment to both non-specialist physicians and allergists, and is actively developing Internet and in-person teaching tools to enhance allergy education. WAO is actively promoting allergy education throughout the world. Since 2000 the WAO has provided lectures on various aspects of allergy to allergy societies throughout the world. Through its Global Resources in Allergy Program, it provides lecture materials to the 35,000 individual members who belong to WAO Member Societies so that they, in turn, may teach others. WAO has launched an international journal to further promote allergy education among physicians interested or already specializing in allergy.

The WAO Emerging Societies Program encourages the development of new national allergy societies throughout the world, particularly in low-income countries. The program is provided in collaboration with the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. By enabling the sharing of practical experiences and alerting new societies to the criteria required for WAO membership, the program helps to create local support networks for allergists, and helps foster a relationship with WAO; at the same time, the WAO leadership is able to learn about the challenges and opportunities faced by colleagues in developing countries. In association with the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology and the European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology, WAO conducts Allergy Training Schools to provide hands-on training in allergy diagnostic techniques and methods of treatment in areas where allergy services are in their infancy.

WAO works to achieve consensus on areas of interest to the global allergy community, and is presently preparing a major global Position Paper on Sub-lingual Immunotherapy, for publication in 2009.

Resources

Warner JO, Kaliner MA, Crisci CD, Del Giacco S, Frew AJ, Gh L, Maspero J, Moon HB, Nakagawa T, Potter PC, Rosenwasser LJ, Singh AB, Valovirta E, van Cauwenberge P. Allergy practice worldwide: A report by the World Allergy Organization Specialty and Training Council. *Allergy Clin Immunol Int – J World Allergy Org.* 2006;18:4–10; and *Int Arch Allergy Immunol.* 2006;139:166–174.

Del Giacco S, Rosenwasser LJ, Crisci CD, et al. What is an allergist? A position statement of the WAO Specialty and Training Council. *World Allergy Organization J* [serial online]. 2008;1:19-20. Available at: www.waojournal.org.

Kaliner MA, Del Giacco S, Crisci CD, Frew AJ, Liu G, Maspero J, Moon HB, Nakagawa T, Potter PC, Rosenwasser LJ, Singh AB, Valovirta E, van Cauwenberge P, Warner JO, for the WAO Specialty and Training Council. Requirements for physician training in allergy: Key clinical competencies appropriate for the care of patients with allergic or immunologic diseases—a provisional position statement of the World Allergy Organization. *Allergy Clin Immunol Int – J World Allergy Org. World Allergy Organization J* [serial online]. 2008;1:42-6. Available at: www.waojournal.org

Potter, PC, Warner, JO, i, Pawankar, RS, Kaliner, MA, Del Giacco, A, Rosenwasser, L, for the WAO Specialty and Training Council. Recommendations for competency in allergy training for undergraduates qualifying as medical practitioners: A World Allergy Organization Position Paper *World Allergy Organization J* [serial online]. 2009;;2; 150-154 Available at: www.waojournal.org

Pawankar, RS; Baena-Cagnani, CE.; Bousquet, J; Canonica, GW; Cruz, AA.; Kaliner, MA.; Lanier, BQ. State of World Allergy Report 2008: Allergy and Chronic Respiratory Diseases *World Allergy Organization Journal.* 1(6):S4-S17, June 2008. Available at: www.waojournal.org