23 December 2013

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Warm greetings and best wishes for a wonderful holiday season from the World Allergy Organization!

We have just returned home after a very successful WAO Symposium on Immunotherapy and Biologics in Chicago, IL, USA where we had 390 delegates, representing 43 countries from around the world. In addition, we had over 40 key experts in the field of allergy, asthma and clinical immunology from around the world that came to share their expertise on the current advances and future research needs in immunotherapy and biologics and their impact on understanding and treating increasingly complex allergic diseases and asthma in the individual patient. This first-of-its-kind Symposium on these very important and timely topics was an outstanding success!

Over the past 62 years, since its foundation in 1951, WAO has demonstrated the excellent results achieved by the best minds from around the world coming together to do the critical work in allergy/immunology. As I reflect on the advances in WAO over the years, a result of the dedicated efforts of our past leadership, I would in particular like to reflect on the last two years: What we had set out to do and what have we been able to achieve, what we need to accomplish further, and the unmet needs. I find myself reflecting on the Call to Action which includes several key elements and looks toward the future of the specialty.

Human interaction amongst individuals and countries has been in place for thousands of years. It is the very core of human existence, welfare and sustainable development. However, the concept of globalization, relating to the process of international integration is essential, even more so in medicine and health.

In January 2012, as the global organization in allergy, asthma and immunology we made a Call to Action to concentrate our efforts towards increased globalization, harmonization and integrating.

**Globalization, Harmonization, Integration**

We set out to strengthen our efforts to increase expertise and academic excellence within the specialty to meet the challenge of allergy as a global public health concern. Increased capacity and improved knowledge leads to better care while also ensuring the future of the specialty. Increasing academic excellence and innovation includes better dissemination of cutting-edge science, advancing knowledge, better research as well as better training of our clinicians around the world. Recruiting younger people into the specialty and training them well has been part of the agenda. In addition, we identified that there is a global knowledge gap that needs to be bridged.
Integrating and participating in multidisciplinary global summits and forums has been part of our sustained efforts to position allergy in the global health agenda.

- White Book on Allergy: Update 2013
- WAO President spoke in the UN panel on “Environment and Health”, highlighting and advocating the need to include allergy in the UN's Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) agenda
- Interacted and held consultations with regulatory bodies and health authorities:
  - EMA (European Medical Agencies) and WHO (World Health Organizations)
- Recognized the Founder leader of our diverse and multicultural organization Prof. Alain de Weck Lifetime Achievement Award given posthumously
- Conducted global surveys on changing food patterns in children, occupational allergy, sports, pediatric asthma, etc
- Developed a document identifying the current worldwide status of precautionary food labeling
- Global guidelines on Cows milk Allergy: DRACMA and its upcoming update
- World Allergy Week
- World Atlas of Aeroallergens, soon to launch

**Collaborate, Communicate**

Global partnerships of multi-disciplinary teams involving policymakers, other global organizations, advocacy groups, medical professionals of other disciplines, academia and industry, can significantly help to reduce the burden of allergic diseases and asthma.

- Interdisciplinary collaborations: National and regional societies, ICAALL (AAAAI, EAACI, ACAAI, and WAO) JSA, APAPARI, APAAACI, SIAAI, KAAACI, ASBAI, INTERASMA, ARIA, GA2LEN, etc
- Interdisciplinary collaborations: European Respiratory Society, International Union of Immunological Societies
- GP Programs- IPCRG, etc educational, research and scientific meeting collaborations
- Patient directed programs and collaborations with patient organizations, patient forum at WISC. Patient focused site on Web
- Manifesto’s on Adherence and Allergens
- Pediatric Asthma Education
- ICD 10 survey with EAACI for prospective recommendations for ICD 11.

WAO will also intensify efforts to disseminate information and encourage dialogue about this global health concern through its website and journal.

- Collaborations webpage
- WAO TV
- Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube)
- Ask the Expert
- Microsite on Eosinophils, Mast cells and Basophils, soon to launch
- WAO Journal becomes Open Access
- Increased Media Presence
Innovate and Strive for Excellence

Creating the right incentives for the pursuit of evidence-based single and complex interventions requires attention to economic appraisal, cost-benefit comparison and cost utility in our analyses. In addition, it is important to continually identify and promulgate new ideas regarding prevention, disease progression, co-morbidities and new therapies targeted toward unmet needs. WAO’s efforts to identify and bridge the current gaps will include initiatives such as centers of excellence, a scientific advisory group and vanguard scientific programming at the WAO congresses and conferences with cutting edge and practical themes covering all sectors of health care providers

- World Allergy Asthma Congress – WAAC 2013
- WAO Symposium on Immunotherapy and Biologics – 2013 Chicago, the first of its kind
- WAO Centers of Excellence
- World Allergy Forum
- WAO Position Papers and Documents:
  o Asthma in the Elderly, article submitted for publication
  o Hypersensitivity reactions to non-beta lactam antimicrobial agents, published
  o Sublingual Immunotherapy: WAO Position Paper Update
  o Grading of side effects of SLIT for respiratory allergy: speaking the same language, published
  o A WAO – ARIA – GA2LEN consensus document on molecular-based allergy diagnostics, published
  o Guidelines on the Prevention of Atopic Disease- GLAD-P, in development

Focus on the Priorities

While expanding the reach to involve other stakeholders, WAO will continue advocacy efforts and help to answer needs in the areas and countries of the world we haven't reached yet. In addition, we identified that there is a global knowledge gap that needs to be bridged, and knowledge is the core of better care. In many areas of the world knowledge, training, and service provision are still greatly needed and Allergy/Immunology specialists in most parts of the world are not in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of the patient load. Primary care physicians and others see most of these patients with asthma and allergic/immunologic disorders.

  o Emerging Societies Program and WAO Allergy Training Schools
  o Defining the Specialty Website
  o WAO undergraduate position paper and allergy immunology curriculum resources

Be Inclusive and Ensure the Future of Allergy

WAO has interacted with its member societies to incorporate the views of our member constituencies toward greater effectiveness. Much work remains in order to increase the number of countries represented in the WAO membership, especially those from lower and middle income countries where allergy is changing so spectacularly. To help ensure the future of the field, WAO
has also begun to increase the involvement of young people by establishing a Junior Member Group.

- WAO grows to 92 member societies
- WAO collaborations with member societies
- World Allergy Training Schools
- Junior Member Group Activities
- Participation in WAO Meetings
- Monthly Journal Club

One specific example of WAO ensuring the future of the field and growing the specialty took place in Kenya, involving 9 East African Countries (September 2012) and in Indonesia (June 2013) and most recently in November during the most recent World Allergy Training School in Harare, Zimbabwe on 25-26 November. This WAO program was in collaboration with ACAAI, International Union of Immunological Societies (IUIS) and the Zimbabwe Allergy Society along with the participation of the Ministry of Health, World Health Organization and the local medical societies in Zimbabwe. Prof Ansotegui, Dr Wallace, Prof Sibanda, Prof Valenta and I were the faculty in the Training School. There were 75 participants who attended of which few were from the 5 neighboring countries, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Uganda and South Africa. The WATS delegates from outside Zimbabwe were sponsored by ACAAI and WAO. Following the WATS we jointly organized a symposium on Non-Communicable Diseases of which our faculty also participated in the afternoon of 26 November and morning of 27 November. There was National TV and print media coverage that gave wide coverage to this initiative and about allergies.

At APAPARI in Bangkok we reviewed the results of WAO - APAPARI collaboration in Asia and had several success stories as in Vietnam and Laos. We’ve been able to accomplish many things over the past two years and I look forward to continuing to increase expertise and capacity within the specialty.

As we move ahead with several of our ongoing initiatives and institute newer ones WAO is moving ahead from strength to strength as the global organization in allergy, asthma and clinical immunology with collaboration and with continuity.

I would like to take a moment to thank and acknowledge all my colleagues on the WAO Board of Directors that have been working with me towards the success of this vision. My colleagues on the Executive Committee - Lanny Rosenwasser (President-Elect), Mario Sánchez-Borges (Secretary-General), Stephen T. Holgate (Treasurer) and Richard F. Lockey (Past-President) — as well as the WAO Board of Directors who represent the major regions of the world — Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East/Africa, North America, Latin America, and CIS:

**Historian:**
G. Walter Canonica (Italy)

**Members-at-Large:**
Ignacio Ansotegui (Spain)
Many thanks to our wider WAO family, our many council/committee chairs and committee and council members from around the world who actively contributed to the various activities of WAO.

Most of all, I extend heartfelt gratitude to our generous and gracious staff who form the very backbone and strength of our organization and work with utmost dedication and professionalism. We run out of words that can truly describe what they most deserve.

As I reflect on the wonderful leaders and friends that I have worked with over the years and will continue to work with, those who have helped to shape the direction of WAO over the years, I would like to share with you a quote that has been a leading light and strength for me at all times, and one that truly reflects the dedication, collegiality and harmony of our Board. As Jim Rohn stated, “The challenge of leadership is to be strong, but not rude; be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not bully; be thoughtful, but not lazy; be humble, but not timid; be proud, but not arrogant; have humor, but without folly.”

Finally, I would like to wish all of you, dear friends around the world, wonderful holidays, good cheer and a happy, prosperous and peaceful New Year! Upwards and onwards into the New Year!!!

Warmest regards,
Ruby Pawankar, MD, PhD
President, World Allergy Organization

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