Welcome to ‘The Sky’s the Limit’ Congress at Sun City! This is the third joint congress hosted by ALLSA and SAPA and its affiliates. The previous joint ventures have been so successful and enjoyable that we decided to collaborate once again. Thank you to SAPA and the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health of the University of the Free State for allowing us to join you, to Sue McGuinness and associates for the organisation, and to the ALLSA organising and scientific committees for making this occasion possible. In particular, thank you to Robin Green, Andrew Halkas and Cas Motala.

A very warm welcome back to South Africa to Susan Prescott and Tom Platt-Mills - we look forward with great anticipation to your contributions to our congress. To Nikoals Papadopoulos, welcome to our congress and to South Africa.

In this report I would like to update you regarding some of our activities since the last journal.

Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology

The journal not only continues to maintain its legendary high standard, but even manages to improve on previous issues. The editors seem to have a never-ending fount of ideas and have an exciting programme planned for the next few editions. Thank you to the guest and section editors for your hard work and for maintaining the exceptionally high standard of the journal. I also cannot thank Eugene, Heather, Anne and Ruwayda often enough for their amazing energy and enthusiasm in editing and promoting the journal.

Membership services and website

Our current membership stands at 697, but sadly many people are not paid up. We really appreciate your support and appeal to you to renew your membership. Just the reduced congress fees make your subscription worthwhile!

The website has undergone a major facelift and just keeps winning awards. Thanks to Di, Ruwayda and Daniel for this input.

Education and training

This portfolio is extremely well managed by Robin Green. We currently host two Diploma examinations every year, and plan to expand our educational activities to include members other than doctors and to take allergy teaching around the country. Keep a look-out for the Masterclass visit to your area! And to our successful Diplomates: we will be publicly acknowledging all of you!

Policy and advocacy

ALLSA’s letter and position statement regarding the ALCAT and IgG tests drew the expected antagonism, but also contributed to some excellent media coverage. We hope that we have made a contribution to public knowledge and debate regarding unconventional allergy testing, and in so doing, assist patients in being informed about allergy testing. Thank you to the Excom and other members for assisting us in this regard.

Research

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2007 research awards announced in the March issue of the journal. You will be publicly acknowledged at this congress. Thank you to the sponsors of our research awards and to the research subcommittee under the leadership of Mohamed J eembay.

Future activities

The acute and chronic asthma guidelines for children will be revised this year, and those who indicated their willingness to contribute will definitely be contacted.

The ALLSA congress in 2009 will be held in Durban. As soon as the dates have been finalised, we will advertise them.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Paul Potter on being elected to the Board of the World Allergy Organisation. We know that he will make a significant contribution to that body and to allergy in general. Thank you to Cas Motala whose term on the Board has come to an end. Cas is an outstanding ambassador for ALLSA and for South Africa, and he will continue to represent ALLSA on many international allergy forums.

Allergy subspecialisation

The application to get allergy recognised as a subspecialty is currently with the HPCSA, having obtained support from many individuals and organisations. The Colleges of Medicine assisted significantly with the application, and I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to Ann Vorster for facilitating it. Thank you to Paul Potter and Cas Motala for all the hard work in preparing the application.

Conclusion

This year we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Allergy Society of South Africa, and we invite you to share this auspicious milestone with us. I was a mere allergy registrar at the time of ALLSA’s birth, but I vividly remember the excitement that accompanied the delivery. Twenty years later ALLSA is one of the most successful and respected professional societies in South Africa. This is a wonderful tribute to the founding members, while at the same time acknowledging the contribution of all our members and supporters. We would not be here today were it not for the relationship with our friends and partners in the pharmaceutical industry, and I would like to express our sincere appreciation for your support during the past 20 years. This celebration is however tinged with a modicum of sadness at the realisation that the founders and helmsmen of the ALLSA ship will not be around forever. We need enthusiastic young people with a passion for allergy and ALLSA to come forward and become involved.

On that note, thank you to my hardworking Executive Committee. Thanks too to Ruwayda, Anne and J eean for your ongoing sterling hard work. Welcome to newbie Shanaaz in the National Office – we hope you will enjoy being part of the ALLSA family.

To the delegates of ‘The Sky’s the Limit’ Congress, I wish you a very enjoyable and instructive meeting. To all the readers of this journal, enjoy this congress issue of the journal with us, and join us in Durban in 2009!

Sharon Kling
Chairman