CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

It is with a sense of privilege and responsibility that I assume the mantle of ALLSA Chairman again for this, the 6th triennium since ALLSA’s inception more than 15 years ago. In August 2003, the new ALLSA executive (see below) was elected and the office bearers announced at the 16th Annual General Meeting of our Society in Cape Town. Dr Sharon Kling retained the portfolio of Secretary of the Society and Dr Adrian Morris was appointed as Treasurer. My warm congratulations are extended to each one of the new executive with the assurance that I will work closely with them and our constituency during the next 3 years to further the aims and objectives of our Society.

ALLSA’s broad aim is to promote good care for those who suffer from asthma and other allergic diseases through education, research and training. Since its inauguration, ALLSA has actively pursued its aims and objectives through a range of activities, including promotion of clinical and scientific research, contributing to continuing professional development (e.g. congresses, workshops, refresher courses, journal club meetings), publications (journal, patient information material) and various national initiatives (e.g. Paediatric Asthma Guideline, Allergic Rhinitis Working Group, FLAG) and international collaborations. The momentum of these activities is sustained mainly through volunteerism by a number of people interested in and committed to allergology and asthma care. The Society would not be where it is today without this tremendous commitment. I therefore wish to acknowledge the previous ALLSA executives for having given unselfishly and spontaneously of their free time to the Society. I also wish to thank members of the current executive committee for their willingness to take on this responsibility.

Before I continue, I wish to offer a special word of thanks to one of the stalwarts of ALLSA, Prof. Paul Potter. Paul has, after almost 15 years of sterling service to the Society, elected to ‘retire’ from the executive. Everyone will remember Paul as the founding editor of our journal, Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology, the first Hon. Secretary (1988-1991) and the second Chairman of ALLSA (1991-1994). Paul has been at the forefront of allergology research, he has played an important advocacy role and has worked tirelessly towards recognition some day of allergology as a specialty in South Africa (the battle continues). I wish to take this opportunity of wishing Paul much success as he begins to pursue new goals and a well-deserved rest from the often onerous activities of the Society. Paul is fortunately not lost to us, and will always be available to advise and guide us when needed. I would also like to thank our immediate Past-Chairman, Dr Ahmed Manjra, for his leadership and outstanding contributions (despite his busy schedule) to ALLSA during the past 3 years. Ahmed introduced a new style of conducting Excom meetings (shorter, vigorous debate and enjoyable). The Diploma in Allergology examination became a reality during his term of office and he led by example by being the first ALLSA chairman to write this examination and pass it with distinction!

Some of the 2003 highlights for ALLSA included the implementation of the Diploma in Allergology examination (March and September 2003), the ‘Dare to Care’ Congress (August 2003, Cape Town), and the Asthma for Africa Congress (October 2003, Durban). Diploma in Allergology: five candidates passed the March examination and two the September examination. Interest in the Diploma in Allergology remains high. The ‘Dare to Care’ Congress, held in collaboration with the South African Thoracic Society and the Critical Care Society of Southern Africa, was attended by more than 1 000 delegates and highly acclaimed. The Asthma for Africa Congress, held jointly with NAEP, was also hugely successful.

This year was also a big one for three executive members: Professor Matt Haus who received the prestigious “Farmovs-Pry’s” Award for 2003 from the SA Academy of Art and Science for outstanding dedication and excellence in the field of clinical and pharmacological research; Heather Zar who was promoted to Associate Professor in Paediatrics, University of Cape Town; and Dr Mohamed Jeebhay who was awarded a PhD for research on “Occupational allergy associated with saltwater bony fish processing in South Africa”. Many congratulations to all of them. I also wish to use this opportunity to pay a special tribute to Professor Eugene Weinberg, who will be retiring as Head of The Allergy Clinic, Red Cross Children’s Hospital in January 2004. Everybody will remember Eugene as the first Chairman of ALLSA, and it was largely through his efforts that ALLSA was established in 1988. We wish Eugene much joy as he pursues new goals and spends more time in Barrydale (his haven and retreat!). More detailed tributes to Eugene appear elsewhere in this issue.

In conclusion, let me once again thank members of the industry for their unqualified support of our Society. Not only at congress time, but throughout the years, the industry has been fully supportive of ALLSA’s activities. I look forward to continuing to work with the industry in a spirit of co-operation, mutual respect and goodwill. Finally on behalf of ALLSA, I wish all our members and readers well over the festive season and a productive 2004!

Cas Motala
Chairman

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