

Editorial

Themes in Allergy

**J. Bousquet, T. Bieber, W. Fokkens,
M. Humbert, M. Kowalski,
B. Niggemann, H-U. Simon**

Professor Jean Bousquet
Clinique des Maladies Respiratoires
Hôpital Arnaud de Villeneuve
Centre Hospitalier Universitaire
34295 Montpellier Cedex 5
France

Accepted for publication 18 November 2005

Allergic diseases are among the major diseases of the world and it is estimated that an estimated 500 million people suffer from allergic diseases. Chronic diseases including allergies are present in all countries and, in developing countries their prevalence is increasing faster than in developed countries (1, 2). They cause a huge burden to society as they may be severe (3). Even allergic diseases which are not considered to be severe, such as allergic rhinitis, impair the social and professional lives of the patients or their caregivers. Moreover, patients with allergic diseases have reduced learning capabilities and impaired school performance. Finally, the economic impact of allergic diseases is substantial.

Allergic diseases result from complex interactions between genes and the environment (4) and co-factors which vary between regions. There is a large diversity of allergic diseases which may involve all organs of the body. They affect all ages from infancy to elderly. Allergic diseases involve several well known mechanisms. Since the discovery that pollens can cause allergic diseases by Charles Blackley in the 1860's, the number of allergenic substances which have been identified has expended enormously. Allergens originate from a wide range of animals, insects, plants, fungi or are small molecular weight chemicals. It is therefore impossible to envisage any allergic disease in a simple way and we should take into account their diversity which is reflected by the papers published in our Journal (5–19). Our Journal has tried to be at the forefront of reporting the European Research in Allergy and started a new series on the European Union Forum (20–23). We also attempted to publish the latest developments concerning the Education of Allergy in Europe (24).

However, it appeared to the Editorial Board of Allergy that that some papers should be grouped and published in the same issue as a "Theme" concerning the mechanisms, epidemiology, risk factors, prevention, diagnosis, control, or pharmacoconomics of allergic diseases.

We are delighted to announce that the format of Allergy, the Official Organ of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, will take into account the diversity of allergic diseases by introducing in some issues a specific Theme. This will include one or two review papers with 3 to 5 original papers which have been submitted to the Journal.

The first Theme is devoted to the immune mechanisms of the IgE mediated allergic reaction. This theme was selected since it is the basis of any allergic disease. It is also a tribute to Prof Gunnar Johansson who has pioneered the field by discovering IgE and who was the very successful Editor-in-Chief of our Journal for more than 10 years (25–28). One of the papers the current Theme is co-authored by Gunnar Johansson. We are also delighted that the first paper has been written by Prof Sergio Romagnani. Sergio has been one of the most prolific and successful scientists of any medical field and has been leading allergy for the past 20 years. The other papers deal with T cells in asthma, IgE regulation, Toll-like receptors and immunomodulation. The papers of the present Theme come from 8 countries showing the widespread coverage of our journal, and it is of importance to mention that authors from Central European countries increasingly contribute to the field.

We hope that the readers of Allergy will be interested in this new format of our journal and we thank all of those who will contribute to make the Themes of Allergy a success.

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