ANNOUNCEMENT

M E D I A R E L E A S E

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Allergic Diseases: A Global Public Health Concern

World Allergy Organization (WAO) and its constituent member societies have designated 4-10 April 2011 as World Allergy Week, promoting the message: Allergic diseases pose a global public health concern.

Why is allergy a major problem worldwide?

- A steady increase in the prevalence of allergic diseases globally — It is estimated that **30-40% of the world population** is now affected by one or more allergic conditions.
- A high proportion of the increase in allergic disease is in young people; in the near future the burden of allergic diseases is expected to greatly increase as these patients become adults.
- Complex allergies involving polysensitization and multiple organ involvement are increasing in prevalence, with a high morbidity placing a higher demand on health care delivery services.
- It is forecast that allergic problems will increase as air pollution and ambient temperatures increase due to environmental and climate changes, affecting pollen counts, stinging insect numbers, and the prevalence of molds associated with allergic diseases.
- Attempts to tackle allergic disease on a country-wide basis are often widely variable and fragmented. The lack of allergy services leads to a decrease in quality of life, increased morbidity and mortality, and considerable cost to patients with allergic diseases. Those living in poverty are seriously affected when allergic illness prevents them from working, more so as the high cost of medications becomes unaffordable.

The newly published WAO White Book on Allergy outlines the data indicating that allergy poses a major global public health issue.

The WAO White Book on Allergy outlines data indicating that allergy poses a major global public health issue; provides high level recommendations to governments, health authorities and other healthcare providers to:

- create a more integrated and holistic approach to the diagnosis and management of allergic diseases;

- increase public awareness of allergic diseases and their prevention;
- provide greater education at the primary healthcare level and to non-allergy-oriented secondary care specialists;
- train medical students and other health care professionals to collaborate with specialists in providing integrated care for allergy patients;
- institute environmental control measures by the lowering of indoor and outdoor air pollution, tobacco smoking, and allergen and drug exposures;
- encourage a preventative approach to allergic diseases, emphasizing the importance of continued research into disease causation and management;
- develop national allergy action plans to promote the prevention of allergic diseases and immune tolerance, aiming to decrease the burden of allergic diseases.

The WAO White Book on Allergy 2011-2012: Executive Summary can be accessed at: http://www.worldallergy.org/publications/wao_white_book.pdf

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About the World Allergy Organization
The World Allergy Organization (WAO) is an international federation whose members consist of 84 regional and national allergy, asthma and clinical immunology societies from around the world. By collaborating with member societies, WAO provides direct educational outreach programs, symposia and lectureships to members in 92 countries.

The organization was founded in 1951 and has successfully organized 21 major congresses. WAO also sponsors scientific symposia in developing areas throughout the world and jointly sponsors postgraduate programs on allergy and clinical immunology during professional, non-allergy association congresses. The World Allergy Organization Journal is the official publication of WAO. Additional information can be found at http://www.worldallergy.org and http://www.waojournal.org.

World Allergy Organization – 1 April 2011

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The Economic Burden of Allergy

A few global facts and figures for two common allergic diseases: asthma and rhinitis:

Country	Year costs calculated	Population (2010)	Disease	Direct costs*	Indirect costs**	Total costs estimated
Australia	2007	23 million	All allergies	A$ 1.1 billion	A$ 8.3 billion	A$9.4 billion
Finland	2005	5.3 million	All allergies	€468 million	€51.7 million	€519.7 million
South Korea	2005	50 million	Asthma Allergic Rhinitis	- 	- 	US$1.78 billion US$266 million
Israel		7.5 million	Asthma	-	-	US250 million
Mexico	2007	103 million	Asthma			US$35 million
USA	2007 2005	310.2 million	Asthma Allergic Rhinitis	US$14.7 billion US$11.2 billion	US$5 billion Up to US$ 9.7 billion	US$19.7 billion Up to $20.9 billion

* Direct costs: Expenditure on medications and health care provision
** Indirect costs: Cost to society from loss of work, social support, loss of taxation income, home modifications, lower productivity at work, etc

Source: WAO White Book on Allergy (Member Society Reports)