

Editorial

Global Allergy and Asthma European Network (GA²LEN) – A focus for paediatric allergy research

GA²LEN is now completing its second year. It is a European Union funded network of excellence involving over 500 researchers in 25 scientific partner groups in 16 different European countries. There are a large number of work packages within the integrated programme. Many, if not all, of these are of very considerable relevance to paediatric allergists. I would particularly draw attention to the birth cohorts' integrated activity and the joint research activities in nutrition, early influences on airway remodelling, infection, gender, quality of life, indoor and outdoor environment.

The network was established with the aim of developing a network of European centres of excellence which would work together to enhance the quality and relevance of research addressing issues related to allergy and asthma. This is the first multinational network of its kind and is notable for its involvement of patients through the European Federation of Allergies and Airway Diseases Patients Association. Indeed their involvement has had a dramatic effect in enhancing the value of the enterprise. This is particularly important in relation to a component of the activity related to spreading excellence. This involves dissemination and translation of research to patients, the public and policy-makers as well as to healthcare professionals and scientists. Clearly in this respect, training and education is paramount.

There was a recent conference to mark the second year of activities held in Berlin at the beginning of April. The conclusion of the second year's achievements is that the network has increased in size and strength. There is a European-wide databank now operational with standard

testing and quality management. There are already three multi-national externally funded clinical trials in the planning process and benefits are accruing to patients, researchers and doctors alike. The first results have already been published in relation to European birth cohort studies (1).

I was particularly pleased that in the meeting the main subjects under discussion were: events occurring during intrauterine life with a special focus on the fetomaternal interface; early life events in the development of allergic sensitization; the translation of allergic sensitization into allergic disease; and the persistence and aggravation of allergic disease and asthma. This puts the paediatric allergist firmly in pole position in relation to many of the future activities of the network. I hope that all our readers will wish to participate in this highly successful collaboration in the future. I also hope that the next European Union Biomed Framework Programme (FP7) will maintain a focus on allergic disease. Certainly there has been intensive lobbying orchestrated through the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology to promote this concept.

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Editor-in-Chief

Reference

1. KEIL T, KULIG M, SIMPSON A, et al. Working Group of GA(2)LEN-WP 1.5 'Birth Cohorts'. European Birth Cohort Studies on Asthma and Atopic Diseases: I. Comparison of study designs - a GALEN initiative. *Allergy* 2006; 61: 221–8.