

## Editorial



# It's time for an evolution

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors have no financial conflicts of interest.

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Allergic diseases are a major public health problem and include life-threatening anaphylaxis, food allergies, certain forms of asthma, rhinitis, conjunctivitis, angioedema, urticaria, eczema, eosinophilic disorders, including eosinophilic esophagitis, and drug and insect allergies. Globally, 300 million people suffer from asthma and about 200 to 250 million people suffer from food allergies [1]. One tenth of the population suffers from drug allergies and 400 million from rhinitis [1]. Moreover, the severity and complexity of allergic diseases are increasing.

This dramatic increase in the prevalence of allergies [2] is observed as societies become more affluent and urbanized, outdoor and indoor pollution increase, and life style and dietary habits change. Other contributing factors are climate change and reduced biodiversity [3]. This indicates the need for better environmental control measures. Furthermore, the economic costs of allergies and asthma are high both in terms of direct and indirect costs [1].

Addressing this in the Asia Pacific region that is the most populous and where the drive to urbanization is the greatest, there is a dire need of an integrated approach strategy to combat the major brunt of both communicable and noncommunicable diseases. The key elements to drive this strategy will be increased collaboration, communication, regional focus within the framework of globalization, harmonization, and integration. We have a responsibility to highlight these impacts to those who develop policies and educate the people.

Within this framework epidemiological studies, environmental control measures to reduce indoor and outdoor pollutants, allergy preventative strategies, bridging the knowledge gap, raising public awareness through targeted programs, engaging and advocacy with policy makers and partnerships with global bodies and multicountry consortia are essential elements for implementation.

Globalization is creating an interdependence that affects both the risks of disease and their potential solutions. Global connections are much more apparent in the case of communicable infectious diseases as is seen in the current pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), since viruses and bacteria are more readily perceived as cross-border threats; consequently, these diseases prompt global cooperation.

Advocacy to energize policymakers to recognize the need and make targeted efforts toward a common goal of reducing the burden of allergic diseases and a more integrated, holistic approach to treatment are essential to prevent unwanted deaths and improving the quality of

life of patients. All of our members will have an integral role to play in the future to achieve the above.

The Asia Pacific Association of Allergy, Asthma and Clinical Immunology (APAAACI) is actively involved in the science and education of allergy, regional data generation and publications of white papers (white paper on climate change) [4] and surveys (drug allergy) [5] on various health and disease areas including asthma, immunotherapy, food allergy, microbiome etc., consensus documents, its educational e-learning's, web lectures, scientific publications in our *Asia Pacific Allergy* journal, scientific collaborations, training workshops and symposia and participation in global guidelines through partnerships with sister organizations. Through these we are building a framework to meet the challenge of the rising complexity of allergies in the Asian Pacific region.

As we embrace the need for change, we continue to focus on people as well as science. We achieve this by creating programs for motivational and inspirational learnings from global leaders to share their inspiring life-path career journey. Through this we aim to engage with the younger generation to learn and be inspired by these talks. We furthermore focus on the career development of junior members through mentorship from our seniors and through several centers of excellence. We also focus on building better collaborative spaces in the digital world where people can share knowledge and ideas with access to learnings.

Person to person interaction and sharing of knowledge are essential to APAAACI. Therefore, we will continue with the in-person meetings as will be the APAAACI International Conferences and the APAAACI Congresses. Moreover, we will consolidate our efforts to ensure that they are maximized learning and interactive experiences. We aim to integrate this by extending the discussions to the online world allowing those learnings and discussions to continue to be shared. We recognize the need to avoid the silence post events. In the current scenario, technology enables us to make these initiatives user friendly and convenient.

From people we move to our community, which includes our patients. They are at the heart of our science and will be part of our collaboration efforts in GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMITS, ADVOCACY and INITIATIVES. The need to being relevant to the world includes influencing policy changes, informing the public of changes like - information on the Vaccine, COVID-19 Evidence Prime, Climate change, Millenniums Development Goals (MDG). thereby engaging with governments, regulators and global bodies like the United Nations (UN), United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

As we pass through these challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, APAAACI as an allergy/immunology community via its COVID-19 Task Force is carefully monitoring and updating Food and Drug Administration/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/ WHO and other crucial scientific information on COVID-19 on our website COVID-19 resource section (<https://www.apaaaci.org/>) including information on the vaccines and guidance on the adverse effects and safety issues of the vaccine [6].

In all these efforts the APAAACI leadership will continue to work together with our numerous committees, international advisors, and national member societies. We look forward to engaging the larger APAAACI community and family to work towards our mission.

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