On the occasion of the 2007 Annual General Meeting, I am pleased to bring you the second issue of the newsletter of the Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases (GARD). This meeting in Seoul, Republic of Korea, hosted by the Korean Asthma Allergy Foundation and under the auspices of the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare, gathers together all our partners to exchange information on GARD and review the achievements of the past year. Shortly after the meeting, a special supplement of the newsletter will be issued to summarize the outcomes and decisions.

Only one year ago GARD was officially launched in Beijing, People’s Republic of China, under the auspices of Prof Longde Wang (Vice Minister of Health) and in collaboration with Prof Nanshan Zhong (President, Chinese Medical Association). Today I am proud to see that GARD activities are advancing and enlarging. This newsletter provides some highlights of the activities of the Alliance over the past six months. Numerous countries in all WHO regions have started to set up national alliances against chronic respiratory diseases as proposed by GARD. Pilot projects on surveillance of chronic respiratory diseases at primary health-care level are ongoing or about to be completed in Cape Verde, Georgia, the Philippines, the Russian Federation and Tunisia, and two demonstration intervention projects are underway in Brazil. In addition, GARD is increasing public awareness of chronic respiratory diseases through several efforts, such as the “10 Facts on Asthma” web feature for the 2007 World Asthma Day, which was highlighted for several days on the WHO home page. World COPD Day (15 November 2007) and World Allergy Day (4 December 2007) will also be GARD activities.

As GARD moves on, I look forward to continuing to work with partners to overcome the stigmas and other obstacles to effective prevention and treatment of chronic respiratory diseases. Special thanks go to Prof You Young Kim and his team at the Korean Asthma Allergy Foundation for hosting this important Annual General Meeting.

Dr Jean Bousquet, GARD Chairman
The Alliance on the move

A new web site

In February 2007, GARD launched its new web site. It matches the web style of the WHO Department of Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion, but at the same time, GARD has created something unique. The web site is regularly updated with the latest information on the Alliance and activities within the field of chronic respiratory diseases.

Launch of GARD for francophone countries in Paris, France

On 11 April 2007, GARD for francophone countries was launched during the second Congrès Francophone d’Allergologie held in Paris, France. This new coordination mechanism aims to group together organizations, institutions and agencies to fight against the burden of chronic respiratory diseases in France and francophone Africa. In the future it is hoped that other francophone countries will join the group.

GARD Francophone will facilitate the exchange of information related to the burden of chronic respiratory diseases in francophone countries. "In addition, it will increase awareness of the impact of lung diseases on people’s health, and how they can be successfully prevented or treated", says Dr Ben-Kheder, Co-Chair of GARD Francophone. "The burden of lung diseases in francophone countries is outstanding but it is clear that this epidemic can be controlled", remarks Professor Bousquet, GARD Chairman.

InterAirways workshop

WHO organized a workshop in San Diego, USA, from 28 February–1 March 2007, on the interactions between diseases of the upper and lower airways. Twenty-seven world experts in the fields of pulmonary medicine, allergy, rhino-otolaryngology, pediatrics and primary care, discussed a draft report on upper and lower airways diseases.

The workshop was opened by Dr Khaltaev (WHO), Responsible Officer for GARD; Professor Bousquet (France) was nominated as Chairperson, Dr Denburg (Canada) and Dr Zuberbier (Germany) as Co-Chairs, and Dr Canonica (Italy) and Dr Kalayci (Turkey) as Co-Rapporteurs.

The InterAirways project, initiated by WHO, is an integrated approach to the study of diseases of the upper and lower airways and their interactions. Examples of such diseases include: rhinitis and asthma, rhinosinusitis, nasal polyposis, occupational airways diseases, lower airway diseases and infections of the upper respiratory tract. The InterAirways project aims to update existing documentation and recommendations and develop a global approach to the prevention, diagnosis and control of diseases of the upper and lower airways.
GARD Symposium for Eastern European countries

Under the patronage of the Polish Ministry of Health and in collaboration with the Polish National Institute of Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases, a symposium involving key experts in the field of chronic respiratory diseases in Eastern Europe was held on 23–24 March 2007 in Zakopane, Poland. The main topic of discussion was how to initiate or upgrade national programmes on surveillance, prevention and control of chronic respiratory diseases.

The Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases focuses specifically on the needs of countries, and fosters country-specific initiatives that are tailored to the local situation. In Eastern European countries, GARD will create the necessary momentum to strengthen capacity to face the increasing impact of chronic respiratory diseases.

Symposium programme	GARD Country initiatives	WHO Regional Office for Europe

Georgia begins GARD pilot projects on surveillance of chronic respiratory diseases at primary health care level

Dr Nikolai Khaltaev, GARD Responsible Officer at WHO, visited Georgia in February 2007 at the request of the Ministry of Health, to initiate GARD Georgia. Meetings were held with Dr George Tsereteli (Chairman of the Committee on Health and Social Affairs), Dr Nikolai Fruidze (Deputy Minister of Health), members of the Georgian Respiratory Association (a GARD participant) and the WHO Office in Georgia. During Dr Khaltaev’s visit it became clear that Georgia was very committed to starting pilot projects on surveillance of chronic respiratory diseases at primary health-care level.

At the beginning of March 2007, the first project began at the Family Medicine Centre of Sagarejo, Georgia, and within two weeks 800 patients were screened. Other pilot projects within the country are foreseen in Mtskheta.

Firstly, doctors help the patients to complete a WHO questionnaire on symptoms of chronic respiratory diseases, environmental exposure and smoking habits.

Secondly, patients are screened for chronic respiratory diseases by doing a spirometry test. Spirometry is a simple and informative test which measures the vital lung capacity.

Similar questionnaires are used in other pilot projects currently taking place in Praia and Saint-Vincent (Cape Verde), Guimaraes (the Philippines) and Ryazan (the Russian Federation).
Who are the participants of the Alliance?

The Alliance currently consists of 47 participants and is still growing. But who are these participants? Two participants of the Alliance are highlighted below in order to introduce them to others and to facilitate collaboration.

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (USA)

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) is part of the US Department of Health and Human Services and provides leadership for a national programme in diseases of the heart, blood vessels, lung, and blood; blood resources; and sleep disorders. The Institute plans, conducts, fosters, and supports an integrated and coordinated programme of basic research, clinical investigations and trials, observational studies, and demonstration and education projects. It also directs research in development and evaluation of interventions and devices related to prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of patients suffering from heart, lung and blood diseases and sleep disorders. Research is conducted in the Institute’s own laboratories and by scientific institutions and individuals supported by research grants and contracts. For health professionals and the public, the NHLBI conducts educational activities, including development and dissemination of materials, with an emphasis on prevention.

Recently NHLBI launched the “COPD Learn More Breathe Better” campaign. In partnership with leading professional societies, health, and advocacy organizations, this national campaign is designed to improve awareness among those at greatest risk of COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). The campaign, which will be rolled out throughout 2007, includes targeted print and radio public service announcements supplemented by fact sheets for patients and those at risk, a reference card for health-care professionals, a web site, an educational video, and materials to help community-level organizations further educate the public about signs and symptoms of COPD.

Press release  Visit the campaign web site  NHLBI web site

National Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (Italy)

The National Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (CCM) was established in 2004 within the Ministry of Health of Italy. The Centre acts to network various competencies, structures and expertise that already exist in Italy at national and regional levels.

The Centre is responsible especially for health emergencies (such as bioterrorism) and new infections (such as SARS), and for active prevention, life styles and screening. The Ministry of Health has outlined the following tasks for the Centre – analysis of risk factors; coordination of surveillance and active prevention plans of the national alert and response systems; promotion and training on the implementation of annual programmes; implementation and evaluation of annual programmes; networking with other national and international health institutions; and information. Since 2005, the Centre has also been responsible for coordination at the regional level of the following interventions provided by the National Prevention Plan 2005–2007: prevention of cardiovascular diseases; prevention of complications of diabetes; diagnosis of cancer; vaccination plan; and prevention of injuries.

In the field of chronic respiratory diseases, CCM supports the Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases. Thanks to this collaboration, CCM is planning to develop a comprehensive national policy on chronic respiratory diseases to include the current programmes focused on specific risk factors.

CCM web site
World Asthma Day 2007: You can control your asthma!

World Asthma Day is an annual event organized by the Global Initiative for Asthma, to improve asthma awareness and care around the world. The theme of World Asthma Day 2007 was “You can control your asthma!”

To support this year’s World Asthma Day, GARD, in collaboration with the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI), developed a special web fact file “10 Facts on Asthma”. This fact file profiles the symptoms and risk factors of asthma and includes a selection of the winning entries from the 16th annual “Living with Asthma” poster contest in 2006. The contest was open to children in the USA (aged 6–14 years) who suffer from asthma. AAAAI and the American Academy of Pediatrics jointly sponsored the contest.

Web feature "10 facts on Asthma"
World Asthma Day web site

Upcoming events on chronic respiratory diseases

9–13 June 2007
Göteborg, Sweden
XXVI EAACI Congress
More information

22–25 June 2007
Istanbul, Turkey
World Asthma Meeting
More information

27–30 June 2007
Riga, Latvia
4th Congress of The Union Europe Region
More information

2–5 August 2007
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
1st Asia Pacific Region Conference (the Union)
More information

16–19 August 2007
Helsinki, Finland
GA²LEN - EAACI Allergy School

20–23 August 2007
Oxford, United Kingdom
GA²LEN - EAACI Allergy School
More information

15–19 September 2007
Stockholm, Sweden
ERS 2007 16th annual congress
More information

15–17 October 2007
Strasbourg, France
GOLF 2007 Cours du Groupe Oncologie de la Société de Pneumologie de Langue Française
More information

20–23 October 2007
Estoril/Lisbon, Portugal
EAACI & ERS Pediatrics Joint Meeting
More information

2–6 December 2007
Bangkok, Thailand
XX World Allergy Congress (WAO)
More information
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