

# Message from the President



Giovanni Viegi, ERS President  
2005–2006

The European Respiratory Society (ERS) continued to grow in 2005 and we now have over 7,500 members. **ERS members originate from more than 100 countries**, so although **European based, our Society is truly international**.

In keeping with our worldwide reach, we have also **expanded our direct collaborations with other societies**. As well as the existing agreement with the American Thoracic Society, we now have Dual Membership arrangements with the Canadian Thoracic Society, the International Society for Aerosols in Medicine, and, at an experimental level, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Pneumologie. New Joint Membership agreements with the Hellenic Thoracic Society and the Turkish Thoracic Society have also been implemented, and such a link with the Sociedad Española de Neumología y Cirugía Torácica (SEPAR) has been so successful that now the highest number of our members originate from Spain.

The ERS structure has also seen some important changes. New *ad hoc* Committees have been created **to meet the increasing demands of a growing society in a rapidly evolving world**, including an Ethics Committee and an Environment and Health Committee. The Smoking Prevention Committee was renamed and is now known as the Tobacco Control Committee and has a renewed composition. Furthermore, a Thoracic Oncology Forum has been set up and discussions to establish a new Scientific Group on Pulmonary Circulation are underway, both of which will help to address other important areas in respiratory medicine.

We also remain **committed to our aim of generating greater political and public awareness of lung health**. And 2005 saw the full deployment of the ERS campaign, in collaboration with the Forum of European Respiratory Societies, for the inclusion of respiratory diseases in the category of “major diseases” within the European Union (EU) **7th Framework Programme for research**. To this end, meetings have been held with the EU Commissioner for Research (and officials such as those involved in the Marie Curie Programme), members of the European Parliament (who have approved relevant amendments) and research ministries at country level. Within the EU 6th Framework Programme for research, in collaboration with the European Society for Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) and top academic institutions, the ERS launched a network of excellence on antibiotic resistance (GRACE).

Special mention must also be given to the Smoke Free Partnership, an alliance of the ERS, Institut National du Cancer and Cancer Research UK. In March 2006, **the Smoke Free Partnership officially launched “Lifting the smokescreen: 10 reasons for a smoke free Europe” at the European Parliament, in Brussels**. This report highlights the burden of passive smoking and calls for legislation to prevent smoking in all enclosed public areas and workplaces.

At the 2005 Annual Congress in Copenhagen, a new record in ERS history was made with the registration of over 16,000 participants. The ERS Scientific Committee provided an excellent programme of Symposia, Hot Topics, Grand Rounds, Oral Presentations and Poster Discussions. I am also pleased to report that over the course of 2005, **we invested more than €1 million in funding** Task Forces, Research Seminars, the Lung Science Conference and ERS Fellowships.

In February 2006, the ERS Executive Committee agreed that the ERS School should continue to produce the educational journal *Breathe*. The Task Force HERMES (Harmonised Education in Respiratory Medicine for European Specialists) also continues to work towards the development of a recognised curriculum with the ultimate aim of **establishing a Diploma for recognition as a European Specialist in Respiratory Medicine**.

The *European Respiratory Journal* has had a successful year too, and saw an increase in its impact factor from 3.1 to 3.95. And in September 2005 it was the proud **winner of the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers/Charlesworth Award for Learned Journals** in recognition of its outstanding design. Special mention was also given to *Breathe* in the “Best New Journal” category for its “refreshing and stylish approach”.

Summing up, our Society is in good shape and continues to provide **an excellent forum of exchange and source of educational material** for respiratory doctors and patients in Europe and beyond. A strategy consultation is ongoing to help the ERS meet the demands of its members over the next 10 years. A special thank you must go to all the elected ERS officers and the staff in the three offices (Lausanne, Sheffield and Brussels), without whom such achievements would have not been possible.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Giovanni Viegi'.