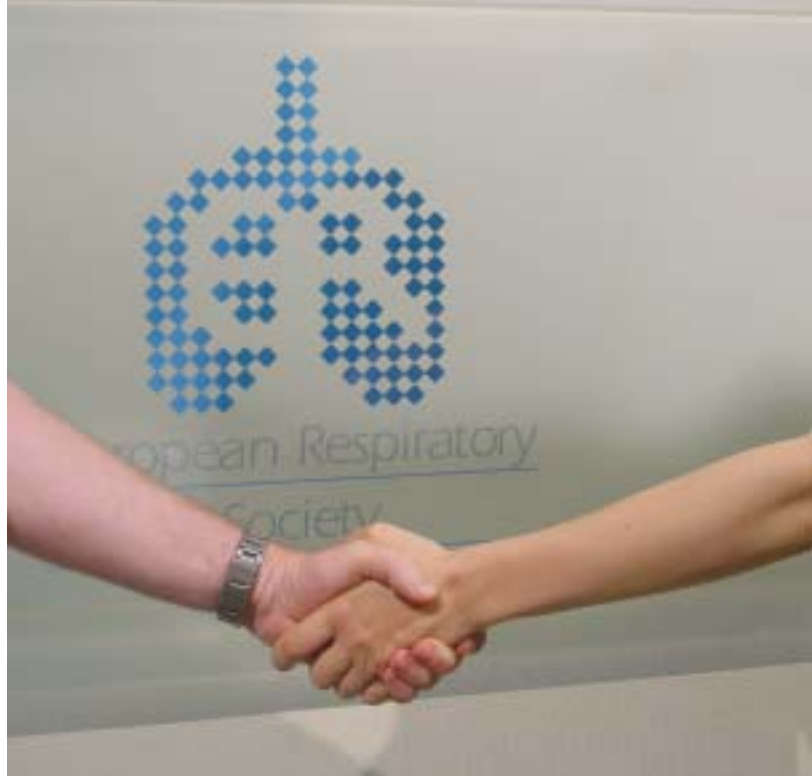


Building Alliances with Other Professional Organisations



“UNIFYING EFFORTS IN THE GLOBAL FIGHT AGAINST LUNG DISEASE”

Working together for a better future

Partnerships with other international and domestic societies and professional organisations are a key element in the broad ERS mission to decrease global morbidity and mortality from respiratory disorders and life-threatening acute illnesses. These alliances, partnerships and working relationships create a synergistic force that serves to strengthen the work of the ERS.

Forum of European Respiratory Societies

An important development during 2004 has been the establishment of a Forum of European Respiratory Societies (FERS). This initiative was the brainchild of Walter McNicholas (ERS President 2003–2004). The primary focus was to ensure greater collaboration between European and national societies by coordinating activities and ultimately strengthening the ability of these societies to promote respiratory health and influence governmental policy agendas. Improved communication with the national societies will also help joint membership initiatives with the ERS. The assistance of FERS will be most valuable in unifying continuing medical education (CME) accreditation systems throughout Europe, as well as helping in the ultimate adoption of a European curriculum in Respiratory medicine.

We are working hard, together with FERS to influence European Union (EU) Members of Parliament (MEPs) and

national ministries to ensure that respiratory diseases are included in the final EU 7th Research Framework Programme (FP7), to be decided in the EU parliament in October 2005. FP7 is the instrument that allows the EU to support research in the EU. Respiratory diseases were not included in the first proposals for FP7, therefore lobbying efforts were undertaken with support at national level. National Society representatives were strongly encouraged to contact their National Ministries of Research and Health civil servants. Two position papers were prepared with contributions from ERS members and from representatives from national societies. The objectives of which were:

- 1) To have respiratory diseases included in the group of major diseases in the next framework programme of research.
- 2) To contribute to European research policy and raise awareness on respiratory science.

American Thoracic Society

Cooperation with our sister organisation the American Thoracic Society (ATS) resulted in the development of the first ever web-based guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The guidelines were published in May 2004, and are available on both the ATS and ERS websites. The unique modular structure provides greater flexibility, as it allows the modules to be updated frequently, to keep abreast of future advances or discoveries. Joint Task Forces, Consensus Statements,

courses and the exchange of ideas at the twice-yearly retreat help in the unification of efforts for the global fight against lung disease.

World Health Organization

The continuing relationship between the ERS and the World Health Organization (WHO) has resulted in a number of important initiatives in 2004. Our contribution was key to the publication of the report entitled *Preparing a Health Care Workforce for the 21st Century: The Challenge of Chronic Conditions*. The purpose of which is to guide future worldwide strategic developments on education and training of health professionals, and to provide care for patients suffering from chronic conditions more effectively. We are also a founding member of the WHO initiative the Global Alliance against Respiratory Diseases (GARD) the aim of which is to ensure that respiratory diseases become a worldwide priority and to establish surveillance, proper diagnostics and availability of affordable treatments for patients in middle and low income countries.

Forum of International Respiratory Societies

The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) was created to combine the efforts of sister organisations, on a global level, to tackle the worldwide burden of lung disease. FIRS works closely with WHO and actively supported, and lobbied for the implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The objective of the FCTC is “to protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke.” It was unanimously adopted by the 56th World Health Assembly. Since the Convention opened for signature on June 30, 2003, 168 countries have signed and on November 30, 2004, Peru became the 40th state to ratify the Treaty, therefore the WHO FCTC entered into force on February 27, 2005.

FIRS Task Forces were also implemented in 2004 and the one on “Standardised Pulmonary Function Testing” has been finalised and approved. The data will be collated and translated where necessary, and the Working Group will draft recommendations on the simplified technical aspects of spirometry. The written reports will be ready in

Autumn 2005 and the final document will be ready in 2006.

International Society of Aerosols in Medicine

ERS set up a new alliance with the International Society of Aerosols in Medicine (ISAM), in 2004, to stimulate interdisciplinary cooperation and exchange of information in all aspects of aerosol research in medicine at an international level. ERS and ISAM leaderships meet periodically to discuss ways in which ISAM and ERS can work together on mutual goals particularly concerning their joint commitment to improving lung health through research, education and advocacy for patient care. They will meet these common goals by: producing joint ERS/ISAM Task Forces which will be set up through the relevant ERS Assemblies with the ultimate goal of producing guidelines; setting up joint courses during their respective yearly congresses; producing joint editorials on aerosol science in the field of medicinal aerosols to be published in the *European Respiratory Journal*; and establishing joint membership schemes.

American College of Chest Physicians

Two “Meet the Professor” Seminars were given in cooperation with American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP), during the ERS Annual Congress in Glasgow (September 2004), and *vice versa* at the ACCP Chest meeting in Seattle, October 2004. The success of this reciprocal arrangement has resulted in plans for future cooperation in 2005, at the ERS Congress in Copenhagen and at the Chest meeting in Montreal. In addition, joint Postgraduate Courses will be held in Copenhagen, the course “Moving on from the Millennium: developing trends in respiratory medicine” will take place with an equal number of speakers representing ERS and ACCP, and during the Chest meeting in Montreal, a PG course on “Sleep-related disorders” will be organised with faculty from ERS, ACCP and the Canadian Thoracic Society.

European Board for Accreditation in Pneumology

The European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME) was established by the Union Européenne des Médecins Spécialistes (UEMS) in

1999 in order to assess the CME value of international meetings. It was intended that the specialist sections of UEMS under the umbrella of EACCME would recommend the number of CME credits for international educational events.

Several of the UEMS sections, in association with their European specialist societies, have set up European Specialty Accreditation Boards which undertake to assess proposed events in their own specialties for educational quality according to strict criteria. The first ESAB was the European Board for Accreditation in Cardiology (EBAC) and the European Board for Accreditation in Pneumology (EBAP) was later set up on the same lines.

EBAP comprises six members, three from the ERS and three from UEMS. Since January 2005, EBAP has assessed 14 planned international respiratory events and has approved 11 of them as worthy of appropriate CME credits. At the recent FERS meeting, held in Brussels (April 2005), the EBAP president outlined the development of EBAP and asked the national respiratory societies for their support in this initiative.

World Asthma Meeting

We joined the ATS, Asthma Foundation of Thailand, the Thoracic Society of Thailand the Allergy and Clinical Immunology of Thailand, Anti-Tuberculosis Association of Thailand, and other worldwide respiratory societies, to co-sponsor the 4th World Asthma Meeting (WAM). It took place in February 16–19, 2004 in Bangkok (Thailand). WAM takes place every three years and as one of a number of sponsoring organisations that support this meeting, the ERS also assisted with the educational and scientific programme and was responsible for final decisions affecting the meeting based on a business plan drawn up by the hosts. The thrust of WAM is educational and clinical and the size of the meeting is determined by the importance of asthma in the region in which WAM takes place.

European Lung Foundation

The European Lung Foundation (ELF) is the “public voice of the ERS”, it was set up in 1999 with the mission of helping the European scientific community share its expertise in respiratory medicine with the public. ELF is

the only pan-European foundation dedicated to lung health. The ELF draws together the knowledge of leading European scientific and medical experts to help: 1) raise public awareness about respiratory disease and its related risks; 2) create new links between authorities in the European Community and specialists in lung health; and 3) improve the quality of medical service delivered in Europe for respiratory disease.

Since 2002, the ELF, together with other partners, have supported national campaigns in Sweden, Austria and Scotland in 2004, to promote the prevention and early diagnosis of COPD. These initiatives are part of a global European public awareness campaign on lung health challenging the public to put their lungs to the test, by taking a spirometry test, in the “The Breath of Life” campaign.