

# Highlighting Assembly 7 – Paediatrics

The Paediatrics Assembly encompasses all fields of respiratory medicine that relate to infants and children. It comprises of seven groups. From October 2008, Assembly 7 welcomes a new Assembly Head, Gunilla Hedlin, and new Assembly Secretary, Ernst Eber.



Gunilla Hedlin



Ernst Eber

## What is paediatric pulmonology?

Paediatric pulmonology is always at risk of being underestimated when compared with adult pulmonary medicine. Children very rarely have lung cancer and COPD is usually thought of as a disease of adult smokers. However, early life events may programme children to be at increased risk for future COPD. Thus, when preventive measures are possible during childhood or even before birth they might mean more for the long-term prognosis than any later treatment can compensate for. We should, therefore, always be in the forefront advocating children's rights to the best treatment and care.

Paediatricians of all subspecialties have the potential to prevent COPD by informing children and, in particular, adolescents about the risks of smoking before they start. Furthermore, we should be on the frontline studying preventive therapies and other measures against asthma caused by airway infections and/or allergies.

## Challenges and pitfalls

One challenge for a paediatric pulmonologist is the diversity of lung diseases in children and their varying severity. Some diseases are very rare and require expertise from referral centres; others are well known but still complicated, such as CF and

interstitial lung disease. New problems arise and new possibilities appear, such as lung transplantation and improved care to prevent pulmonary complications in very pre-term babies. Another field of increasing interest and knowledge is the regulation of breathing. There will also be a tremendous development in genetic markers for risk of disease and a heightened awareness of the importance of correct phenotyping.

## An active Assembly

The Paediatric Assembly should be active in all these areas and encourage the experts to reach out to our Members and all paediatricians to ensure there is continuous dialogue between those active in paediatric pulmonary research.

We look forward to the next three years as Head and Secretary of this most important Assembly. We are very confident in the spectrum of knowledge that is represented by our members. We need to get lung diseases in children recognised further and to increase our participation in ERS activities.

## Introducing the Incoming New Assembly Head

My first engagement in the Paediatric Assembly was to represent Sweden in the work initiated by Max

Zach to constitute a syllabus for the speciality of paediatric pulmonology and my latest was as Co-Chair of the 2007 Congress in Stockholm. My personal research has mainly been in childhood asthma and together with the former Head, Kai-Håkon Carlsen, and the current Head of the Assembly, Andy Bush, we have started a network of European paediatricians working on a standardised protocol for identification and characterisation of severe asthma in children. This is being done within the Ga'len network.

## .....and the Incoming Assembly Secretary

My past and present commitment to the Paediatric Assembly and the ERS comprises a wide range of activities, such as Secretary and Chair of the Bronchology Group, National Delegate for Austria and faculty member of several ERS School Courses, e.g. "Hands-on Course in Paediatric Bronchoscopy". I have also been a member of several ERS Task Forces.

We are impressed by the work of the Paediatric Assembly and of its current Head Andy Bush and Secretary Monika Gappa. It is a great honour to continue the work that you and they have been doing so far.

Gunilla Hedlin  
Ernst Eber