

A Meeting with Andrea Rossi, New Scientific Committee Chair

As Andrea Rossi takes over from William MacNee as Scientific Committee Chair, he has agreed to share his views on the Scientific Programme of the Annual Congress and the role that all ERS members can play in its development.

How is the Congress Programme developed by the Committee?

There have always been productive discussions about the development and structure of the Annual Congress Programme. The key task of the Programme Committee has been the development and selection of more than 50 sessions, in order to provide a balanced and attractive programme. In addition to the many proposals for symposia, we receive nearly 4,500 abstracts, which are allocated to oral presentations, poster discussions or thematic poster sessions. The Scientific Group Chairs, together with the Assembly Heads and Secretaries, share a direct responsibility for this fundamental part of the scientific programme.

A major challenge for the Scientific Committee Chair is to promote cooperation and integration among Assemblies with a positive spirit for competition. Most of the Major, as well as Assembly Symposia, result from close collaboration between the Assemblies and, in particular, the Assembly Heads. The high quality of the programme in Vienna was largely due to this interaction. We have now reached a stage where the distinction between Major and Assembly Symposia may no longer be obvious, although some differentiation among sections of the overall Programme may help the delegates to "build" their Congress itinerary.

Some Symposia are intended to address the most relevant clinical topics. The target audience is clinical pulmonologists who are looking for a clear and comprehensive update on

the status and progress of knowledge, which might influence their clinical practice and may even (optimistically!) improve patient care. This type of Symposia is expected to include the most significant aspects of basic science and to deliver a definitive clinical message. On the other hand, the traditional purpose of Assembly Symposia is to provide a forum for more research-oriented topics, where basic science is discussed and debated in a scientific perspective. Assembly Symposia are also expected to address clinical topics of interest to specific groups of clinically engaged specialists.

How do you view the input of the membership through the Groups and the Assemblies?

Membership is obviously the blood of our Society. It is essential that each member be given the chance to contribute to the programme and Group Officers are encouraged to get as much input from their members as possible. Ideas can be communicated at the Membership Meetings during the Congress, through e-mails, with the help of the Long-Range Planning Committee or the Assembly Programme Committees established by some Assemblies. It is the role of Assembly Heads to report to the Scientific/Programme Committee the comments and suggestions received from their Members and Group Officers.

I have suggested that some decisions be delayed, so that members have the opportunity to give their opinions. For instance, the selection of Symposia for Glasgow, which should have been done in Vienna, was postponed until November.

Could you explain which criteria the Programme Committee considers when selecting speakers for a given presentation?

There are many suggestions and



proposals, and in addition, there are a lot of very good speakers within the ERS, so the choice is sometimes difficult, but it is always made to ensure the highest level of quality for any given presentation. The Scientific Programme Committee has an open and lively discussion about all proposals on a specific topic, led by the relevant Assembly Head, which takes into consideration four issues: the evidence of competence, the recent scientific activity, the reputation of the potential speaker as a good communicator, and the need to have some rotation among speakers.

For a Major Symposia, you would expect an experienced speaker with the ability to provide a comprehen-