



Introducing the New Research Director

During the 2007 Congress, the ERS appointed a Research Director to meet the increasing opportunities in the field of research, as well as to promote and coordinate scientific activities. This position will be held by Prof. Sven-Erik Dahlén, who has been an active member and held many positions within the ERS over the years, including the 2007 ERS Congress Chair.



Prof. Sven-Erik Dahlén

Why were you interested in this position and what are your key objectives?

I have become increasingly frustrated with the low level of funding available in Europe for respiratory medicine research. A major reason for my interest in this role was the opportunity to do something to improve this. I will devote a major part of my services to activities intended to increase research support at many levels, in particular within the EU Framework programmes. It is critically important for the ERS to promote increased funding for high-quality research in respiratory medicine.

In addition, I believe the ERS Fellowship Programme is an important vehicle by which to attract young scientists to this field and to promote European collaboration. Part of my role is to review the Fellowship Programme and see if it can be enhanced further.

Finally, I would like to see new

opportunities to run corporate, independent clinical trials. It is possible that the ERS may have a role in facilitating actions that create platforms to run large activities. I am not saying the ERS should run trials, but it could promote support for establishing new mechanisms for this purpose. This is something that the USA has carried out for many years.

What is your opinion about the current research activities of the ERS?

Initiatives such as the Lung Science Conference, Research Seminars and Workshops are effective ways to stimulate knowledge exchange and create new research interfaces. My interaction with the Assemblies and the ERS Officers may aid these important sections of the ERS. It is also possible that there are new strategies to be considered in order to make the annual Congress even more successful in developing science.

As I am new in this position, I have no preconceived ideas about current activities. For the moment, I am listening to reports from ERS members and Officers to learn about all activities. It takes time to understand the relationships between the ERS Committees and Directors. After the collection of the information, and due deliberation I hope to be able to propose new actions to benefit the Society and its members. It is possible that this process may require a formal assessment of some activities.

What is your previous experience as a leader in science?

At my home institute, Karolinska Institutet, I am Head of a research unit of approximately 25 basic and clinical scientists. The budget of my own team is mostly derived from

external competitive grants. I am also the Director of the Centre for Allergy Research at this institute, a network organisation that attempts to stimulate transdisciplinary research by supporting some core facilities, Postdoctoral positions and project grants for collaborative research. The work includes promoting clinical research. On a European level I have been involved in several EU projects and I am the coordinator of the BIOAIR project (FP5). I have extensive experience of evaluating quality in science in various reviewing and granting bodies, something I hope to bring into my new role.