

Message from the President



Leonardo M. Fabbri,
ERS President 2007–2008

I am pleased to report that the **European Respiratory Society (ERS)** has continued to expand and progress over the past year. However, we have also encountered some difficulties in 2007 and the year has highlighted areas that should be considered for future improvement.

Until recently, membership to our Society showed a progressive increase year on year. It is now stable at around 8,000 members, a number that represents a minority (<10%) of the specialists from more than 100 countries represented in the ERS. This is frustrating, as ERS membership offers a wide and very rich range of scientific and educational benefits. To address this, we are **continuously exploring new ways to improve membership services**. In 2007, we met with leaders of the major national societies and discussed how best to attract national specialists to the ERS. The publication of documents in English was recognised as a major obstacle. Consequently, we are now exploring different ways to overcome this, through translation of selected papers and audiovisual resources, for example.

The ERS Annual Congress is our Society's major scientific event. The 2007 Stockholm Congress was once again **excellent in terms of science, education and organisation**. Unfortunately, although our Congress remains one of the largest in its field, the 2007 event was attended by a lower number of delegates (<15,700) than Munich 2006 (over 17,000). This both reduced our exposure to respiratory specialists and had a negative financial impact on the ERS. Geographic location and costs are thought to be the main causes of the decrease; thus, we hope that the 2008 Berlin Congress will attract a much larger number of delegates, and will be the biggest and best respiratory meeting in the world.

Our increasing involvement in research activities related to the European Union (EU) Seventh Framework Programme for Research (FP7) this year brought concrete results. We **participated in two major EU grant applications** on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (the Emphysema versus Airway (EvA) disease project) and tuberculosis (the TB PAN-NET project), which were selected for funding. Calls for major research funding within the Innovative Medicine Initiative also began in 2007, concerning chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, severe asthma and rhinitis. As part of this initiative, our Society has been **instrumental in lobbying for funding**, providing a forum for scientific discussion, and facilitating and supporting successful applications.

Our increasing impact in respiratory science was further confirmed in 2007 by the **significant rise in prestige and reach of our publications**. The impact factor of the *European Respiratory Journal* rose once again, from 5.076 in 2006 to 5.349 in 2007, making it the third highest journal in the field. The *European Respiratory Review* and *Breathe* also saw a huge rise in online hits and article downloads.

During the year, the ERS School **continued to develop and implement innovative methods of delivering medical education** to ERS members. The e-Learning Centre on the ERS website provides an extensive range of resources and in 2007 presented a new series of Web-based Educational Courses and Research Seminars that have become **the gold standard in the field**. These will be further developed in 2008. The HERMES (Harmonised Education in Respiratory Medicine for European Specialists) project has also progressed significantly since the development of a European Core Syllabus for training in respiratory medicine, which is now available in several languages. The Syllabus will provide the basis of the first examination for a "European Diploma in Respiratory Medicine", which will be offered during the 2008 Congress.

Over the last year, the European Lung Foundation (ELF) has seen further development as the public voice of our Society. It is fully achieving its aim of raising awareness of lung disease amongst the public and patients, particularly in relation to major risk factors such as smoking, pollution and climate change. The **ELF's well-established website has been translated into eight languages** and has achieved an increasing number of hits.

Overall, 2007 has brought changes, improvements and challenges to the ERS. Our Society has in 2008 experienced major financial constraints because of a large budget deficit in 2007. However, due to the dedicated work of past and new officers, managers and staff members in Lausanne, Brussels and Sheffield, the ERS has not only survived but has continued to grow and to correct the financial situation. On behalf of all members of the ERS, I would like to thank all of these groups for their contribution towards our continued success.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Fabbri'.