

EDITORIAL

The 10th anniversary of the Junior Members and Affiliates of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology

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Abstract

This year is the 10th anniversary of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) Junior Members and Affiliates (JMAs). The aim of this review is to highlight the work and activities of EAACI JMAs. To this end, we have summarized all the initiatives taken by JMAs during the last 10 yr. EAACI JMAs are currently a group of over 2380 clinicians and scientists under the age of 35 yr, who support the continuous education of the Academy's younger members. For the past decade, JMAs enjoy a steadily increasing number of benefits such as free online access to the Academy's journals, the possibility to apply for Fellowships and the Mentorship Program, travel grants to attend scientific meetings, and many more. In addition, JMAs have been involved in task forces, cooperation schemes with other scientific bodies, organization of JMA focused sessions during EAACI meetings, and participation in the activities of EAACI communication platforms. EAACI JMA activities represent an ideal example of recruiting, training, and educating young scientists in order for them to thrive as future experts in their field. This model may serve as a prototype for other scientific communities, several of which have already adapted similar policies.

According to futurist Alvin Toffler, 'for society to attempt to solve its desperate problems without the full participation of even very young people is imbecile'. This becomes even more relevant in the context of scientific communities, which are compelled to keep pace with the rapid progress in the biomedical field. The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) recognized very early the significance of integrating young scientists in the ongoing evolution of research and clinical practice.

History and benefits of Junior Members and Affiliates (JMAs)

The JMAs of the EAACI are now a group of over 2380 clinicians and scientists under the age of 35 yr. Initially founded in 2001, the group aims at supporting the education of the Academy's younger members, as well as their participation in, and influence on, EAACI activities. This year, JMAs celebrate their 10th anniversary and have added even more activities on their agenda.

Junior Members and Affiliates enjoy a number of benefits as members of the world's most active allergy and clinical immunology association. These include free membership and online access to the official EAACI journals (Allergy and Pediatric Allergy & Immunology), the possibility to apply for Research and Clinical Fellowships, and travel grants to attend EAACI Annual Congresses but also smaller Focused Meetings and Allergy Schools. Indeed, according to the 2010 and 2011 online questionnaires addressing JMAs, travel grants represented the only funding opportunity to attend the aforementioned meetings for the majority of juniors who took part in the survey (1). Junior membership in the Academy also provides the inestimable possibility to become actively involved in all of its activities by applying for a position in the JMA Working Group (WG). The JMA WG is the representative body of EAACI JMAs, which until recently was composed of a webmaster, one representative from each of the five EAACI sections and a chairperson (Table 1). As of this year, the WG has expanded to also include one representative from each of the EAACI Interest Groups (Table 2).

JMA sessions at EAACI meetings

Since the establishment of JMAs in 2001, numerous initiatives have increased their participation in the Academy's life.

Table 2 Junior Members and Affiliates Working Group Board Members from 2011 to 2013

	2011–2013
Chairperson	Enrico Heffler
Asthma S Rep	Sven Seys
Dermatology S Rep	Lilit Hovhannissyan
ENT S Rep	Valerie Hox
Immunology S Rep	Milena Sokolowska
Pediatrics S Rep	Alexandra Santos
Webmaster	Rodrigo Rodrigues Alves
Aerobiology and Pollution IG Rep	Indre Butiene
Allergy, Asthma and Sport IG Rep	Mariana Couto
Allergy Diagnosis IG Rep	Filippo Fassio
Allied Health IG Rep	James Gardner
Drug Allergy IG Rep	Paul Whitacker
Food Allergy IG Rep	Annalisa Santucci
Functional Genomics and Proteomics IG Rep	Serena O'Neil
Immunotherapy IG Rep	Paraskevi Maggina
Infections and Allergy IG Rep	Heidi Makrinioti
Insect Hypersensitivity IG Rep	Dario Antolin-Amérigo
Occupational Allergy IG Rep	Gianni Pala

S, Section; IG, Interest Group; Rep, Representative; ENT, Ear, Nose, Throat.

Thus, Juniors now enjoy a series of sessions during the Annual Congress that are targeted toward their needs as physicians and basic scientists at the dawn of their career. The JMA Poster Session is co-chaired by one junior and one senior EAACI member and provides prizes for the most outstanding presentations. The latter also holds for the best three of the 10 short presentations in the JMA Case Reports Session. The JMA Scientific Symposium features cutting edge science presented by JMAs, while the JMA Educational Session aims at providing support to young scientists in regard to common everyday challenges in their professional lives. The JMA Business Meeting and Social Event are the platform for the strategic programming of the group and networking. Apart from the Annual Congress, JMAs have also organized oral abstract symposia and other scientific symposia in the context of Focused Meetings. Furthermore, Allergy Schools organized by the Academy are activities addressing mainly the younger membership, with the opportunity to receive travel grants in conjunction with abstract

Table 1 Junior Members and Affiliates Working Group Board Members from 2001 to 2011

	2001–2003	2003–2005	2005–2007	2007–2009	2009–2011
Chairperson	Susanna Olsson	Philippe Gevaert	Ulrike Raap	Luis Miguel Borrego	Chrysanthi Skevaki
Asthma S Rep	Bart Lambrecht	Gert-Jan Braunstahl	David Groneberg	David Groneberg	Enrico Heffler
Dermatology S Rep	Ulrike Raap	Ulrike Raap	Elena Borzova	Elena Borzova	Lilit Hovhannissyan
ENT S Rep	Philippe Gevaert	Peter Hellings	Michael Rudenko	Michael Rudenko	Michael Rudenko
Immunology S Rep	Stefano Del Giacco	Stefano Del Giacco	Marcin Kurowski	Marcin Kurowski	Milena Sokolowska
Pediatrics S Rep	Nina Blümchen	Nina Blümchen	Luis Miguel Borrego	Mara Xatzipsalti	Mara Xatzipsalti
Webmaster	Ioana Agache	Ioana Agache	Chrysanthi Skevaki	Chrysanthi Skevaki	Rodrigo Rodrigues Alves

S, Section; Rep, Representative; ENT, Ear, Nose, Throat.

submission. JMA WG members who attend these schools write reports, which are published on <http://www.eaaci.net> and the EAACI Newsletter.

The pediatric perspective

From the Pediatrics Section perspective, the JMA representative is naturally involved in planning the sessions proposed by the section for inclusion in the Scientific Program of the Annual Congress, as well as in the evaluation of related abstracts. JMAs have been involved in the 2005 and the 2007 joint meeting of the Pediatrics Sections of the EAACI and the European Respiratory Society (ERS), held in Prague, Czech Republic, and Lisbon, Portugal, respectively. More specifically, JMAs have participated in the Local Organizing Committee and its preparations but also included a scientific symposium with EAACI Juniors as speakers. JMAs were also systematically involved in a number of sessions of the 2009 Pediatric Allergy and Asthma Meeting held in Venice, Italy. What is more to add, research activities of the JMA Pediatrics Section Representatives but also of other JMAs belonging to the Pediatrics Section are regularly highlighted through publications in the Academy's official journals (2–4).

Education and training opportunities for JMAs

The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, in collaboration with the UEMS, have prepared an examination on Allergology/Clinical Immunology, which has been held annually since 2008 during the Annual Congress of the Academy. This initiative aims at further improving the standards of the specialty by harmonizing the educational level throughout Europe. JMAs have been actively involved in its preparation and evaluation since its inception, through the inclusion of a JMA representative in the EAACI Exam Task Force (TF), which has now been transformed to a committee. The exam serves as a self-evaluation tool and is expected to facilitate the mobility of young people trained in Allergology and Clinical Immunology across the continent, while JMAs are entitled to waived exam registration fees.

Juniors are now represented within several other TFs as well, such as the revised 'PRACTALL on Pediatric Asthma' and 'Pediatric Rhinitis', a joint TF of the Pediatrics, Asthma, and ENT Sections.

The EAACI Clinical and Research Fellowship Awards are another important achievement targeting the younger members of the Academy. These awards aim at spreading Allergy and Clinical Immunology in Europe, supporting research and training of JMAs and highlighting their work through increased publications. Additionally, Clinical and Research Fellowship Awards provide the means for increasing the mobility of young researchers within Europe and spreading the implementation of new techniques.

Quite recently, the Mentorship Program (MP), a new initiative developed by the JMA WG, was officially launched in the context of EAACI Istanbul 2011. The MP plans to ensure ongoing education for young scientists and to enhance JMA capacities as professionals, thus promoting the

objectives of our field. This is a strategy aimed at building members' skills and career and taking a strong profession into the future. The MP is expected to improve knowledge transfer of experienced professionals to Juniors, increase JMAs' appreciation of and orientation in the field, and promote opportunities for JMAs to work closely with a faculty mentor for the development of a paper for presentation at an academic conference and/or for publication. Following the first open call in 2011, 87 potential mentors were enrolled, who are all renowned members of the Academy, while 36 of 41 applications submitted by JMAs were accepted in the MP.

JMAs in the communication field

In the communications field, JMAs have been included in the Editorial Boards of the <http://www.eaaci.net> as well as the <http://www.allergynews.com> and contribute regularly to their online content. Also, several articles and reports of the EAACI Newsletter are composed by JMAs. Very importantly, a new collaboration between JMAs and the Pediatric Allergy and Immunology (PAI) journal has been recently initiated (5). Core elements of this alliance are the selection of 'Must read papers' (6) from each PAI issue for medical residents and other young scientists in the field, the opportunity provided to JMAs to submit 'hot topic reviews' in cooperation with their mentors for publication in the PAI journal, as well as the participation of JMAs who are highly active in research and more advanced in their career in the PAI editorial process by acting as reviewers.

Collaboration schemes within and beyond the academy

JMAs currently participate in other EAACI bodies as well, such as the CME Committee but also in non-EAACI bodies, such as the Allergy UEMS Section and Board. Moreover, they have cultivated collaborations with respective sectors of other related scientific societies, such as the Fellows in Training of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI) and the Juniors of the Federation of Clinical Immunology Societies (FOCIS) and of the European Rhinology Society.

Conclusion

It becomes evident that the EAACI JMAs have evolved tremendously over the past decade. This is of particular significance for an association of clinicians, researchers, and allied health professionals, dedicated to improving the health of people affected by allergic diseases. Today's JMAs are tomorrow's top scientists and opinion leaders. Thus, JMA activities and opportunities targeting this community represent excellent approaches for their continuous education, training, and preparation as future allergy and clinical immunology experts. Join the EAACI JMAs now and become part of one of the most dynamic groups of scientists in the world.

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