

EULAR

A good year for European rheumatology

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I am pleased to be able to summarise 2006 as a year of further advances in European rheumatology.

EULAR was very satisfied with the large number of attendants at the European Congress of Rheumatology in Amsterdam in June. We had more than 11 000 delegates from 107 different countries; 3030 abstracts were submitted; 215 were accepted as oral presentations and 1825 as posters.

An important goal of EULAR is to raise the awareness of rheumatic diseases. Our lobbying campaign in Brussels seems to be successful as rheumatic diseases will have a more prominent mention in the research framework program 7, but we need to continuously influence the allocation of research money in the direction of rheumatic diseases in the forthcoming calls for applications.

EULAR is fostering research and educational activities that will ultimately lead to the better treatment and care of patients. We have supported several multinational European research projects over the last few years, but during the past year have also focused more on educational activities under the leadership of The Standing Committee on Education and Training (ESCET): the EULAR postgraduate course was successfully organised in Warsaw in November, the web-based online course has just been launched and we have developed a plan for regular EULAR courses, as well

as guidelines for EULAR patronage to other courses of relevance to European rheumatology.

The Standing Committee on Clinical Studies (ESCISIT), in particular, is working on the elaboration of recommendations for the management of, or performing clinical studies in, rheumatic diseases. Results of several initiatives were presented at the meeting in Amsterdam and new task forces have been started or are just being completed. Some initiatives are also performed together with the American College of Rheumatology.

Major work for the improvement in research, education and clinical care is also going on in the other standing committees (investigative rheumatology, epidemiology, health professionals, social leagues, paediatric rheumatology). Importantly, initiatives have been taken to improve both the research and educational activities for allied health professionals in the area of rheumatology in Europe.

EULAR is also focusing on worldwide aspects of rheumatology. We collaborate with the other regional leagues and EULAR has also been active in the attempts to reorganize ILAR into an umbrella committee of the regional leagues and The American College of Rheumatology. We believe that such a new organisational structure will improve the ability of ILAR to carry forward task

forces that may also improve the standard of care of patients with rheumatic diseases in the developing countries of the world.

One particular important advance in 2006 has been the rise in the impact factor of *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases*. The EULAR Journal now has an impact factor of 6.956, and this success has led to an even higher number of submissions to the Journal and even stronger competition for publication.

We expect 2007 to be another successful year for European rheumatology. EULAR will continue to support research and educational activities in Europe and to strengthen the partnership within EULAR between patients, researchers and clinicians. EULAR will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2007 and some special events are planned during the EULAR congress in Barcelona in June 2007. The Scientific Program Committee is developing an interesting and challenging programme for this congress. Some minor modifications to the traditional programme structure should be easily identified if you click onto our new website (www.eular.org), which we expect to be a much better communication tool between EULAR and membership organisations.

I take this opportunity to thank the large number of rheumatologists, patients and health professionals who are making major intellectual and time-consuming contributions to the successful activities of EULAR. I wish the rheumatological community a good 2007 and, in particular, I wish you a hearty welcome to the EULAR congress in Barcelona 13–16 June 2007.

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