

GUEST EDITORIAL

TO ALLERGY TEST OR NOT TO TEST?



It was a great privilege to be asked to edit this first issue of *Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology* for 2006 with allergy testing as the theme.

Allergy testing remains a very controversial area of clinical medicine and we have tried to cover as many important issues as possible. There seem to be two camps

of thought: the 'testers' who routinely test all patients with symptoms of allergy and the 'treaters' who prefer to treat pharmacologically without allergy testing. I have attempted to provide as much evidence base as possible in favour of using validated tests for routine allergy diagnosis and hope that after reading this issue that many of you will be converted to being 'testers'.

Most importantly, this is the first tissue of *Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology* to be CPD accredited. At the end of the journal we have provided a series of CPD questions which can be answered interactively on the ALLSA website at www.allergysa.org. Successful candidates will have CPD points directly credited electronically to the HPCSA.

In this issue Koshak's original Saudi Arabian study highlights the allergic nature of asthma, the importance of allergy testing and the predictive value of total IgE and Phadiatop in identifying atopic asthma. This theme is continued in my article on cost-effective allergy diagnosing, looking at the combined predictive value of using both Phadiatop and fx5 food allergy screens, and the number of test allergens testing positive. We also explore the impact of the allergen load on clinical symptoms. Potter clearly defines the role of the cellular aller-

gen stimulation test (CAST) in identifying allergens for which we previously had no reliable tests. Lopata discusses the more complex and specialised allergy tests available, as a prelude to his new regular feature on allergy testing which will continue in future issues of this journal. We also include our first ALLSA Position Statement on Skin-Prick Testing which will act as a basis for clinical practice. In contrast, the article on controversial complementary and alternative allergy tests clearly shows that these so-called 'allergy and intolerance tests' play no useful role in allergology, and should be avoided as they can only lead to misdiagnoses and delay effective treatment.

We continue our regular clinical features – Clinical Allergy Images edited by Du Toit, Allergies in the Workplace edited by Jeebhay and Todd, Skin Focus by Docrat and ABC of Allergology by Morris – and introduce a new feature, Snippets from Other Journals, compiled by Puterman.

Remember to diarise the forthcoming 2006 'All 4 Kids' ALLSA Congress due to take place in conjunction with SAPA at Sun City in early September 2006.

Finally I would like to thank my brother Dr Hugh Morris, MMed (Path), MRC Path (UK), for his superb practical input into this issue, who recently passed away following a cycling accident.

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Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology has been accredited for CPD points in the Clinical category, so you can now earn 2 CPD points for Individual Learning. CPD accreditation is **only** available through the online service; no faxed or mailed responses will receive CPD credits. To obtain CPD credits:

1. Read the journal
2. Answer the questionnaire on p.51 by accessing the online CPD accreditation on the ALLSA website at www.allergysa.org/cpd or follow the links from the home page www.allergysa.org.
3. To register, you will need to enter your name, personal details, HPCSA number and a password.
4. Once you have registered, you will receive an email

confirming your registration. You can either answer the questionnaire immediately or log on at a later date to answer the questionnaire. Please note that each questionnaire has a closing date – the closing date for submission of the March 2006 questionnaire is 31 May 2006.

5. Follow the instructions given on the questionnaire page and online.
6. After you have submitted your answers, they will be marked immediately, and you will be informed of the results and the number of points earned.
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