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Note to media: See www.worldallergy.org/worldallergyweek



Complexity of allergic disease impacts patient quality of life
World Allergy Organization calls for integrated approaches to patient care as the global burden of allergic diseases and asthma continues to rise to epidemic proportions

MILWAUKEE – The World Allergy Organization will present data on the marked global increase of allergic diseases, highlighting that allergies are becoming more severe and complex and that the heaviest burden is on children and young adults. Allergy interacts with many other environmental factors such as pollutants, infections, lifestyle, and diet that increase the impact on chronic disease. WAO will address the need for increased disease awareness, improved patient care, better healthcare delivery and a focus on preventative strategies, during a World Allergy Week 2012 press conference at 9:00 am EDT today.

Approximately 30 to 40 percent of the world's population suffers from allergic diseases, and the prevalence is escalating to epidemic proportions. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 300 million individuals have asthma worldwide, a figure that could increase to 400 million by 2025 if trends continue. Allergic rhinitis, which is a risk factor for asthma, affects 400 million people annually, and food allergies affect about 200 to 250 million. An estimated 250,000 avoidable deaths from asthma occur each year. Prof. Marek Kowalski, Chair of the World Allergy Week Steering Committee, said that "The increase in multiple allergies occurring in a single patient is making the global burden even more complex, and an integrated approach to diagnosis and treatment of allergies is required. Rhinitis ("allergies"), allergic conjunctivitis (itchy, red and watery eyes), and asthma occurring together in the same patient, or rhinitis, asthma, and food allergies, are examples of complex allergies that commonly manifest together in patients with allergies."

As the prevalence of allergic disease rises in countries around the world regardless of their economic status, so do the socioeconomic costs both direct (interference with breathing during day or night, emergency department visits, hospitalizations) and indirect (reduced quality of life, reduced work productivity and absenteeism). Prof. Ruby Pawankar, WAO President, said "WAO recommends (1) increased, availability and accessibility to allergy diagnosis and therapies (2) increased resources dedicated to advanced research toward preventive strategies to increase tolerance to allergens and slow disease progression and (3) global partnerships of multi-disciplinary teams, involving clinicians, academia, patient representatives, and industry. The common goal is to reduce the burden of allergic diseases and develop cost-effective, innovative preventive strategies and a more integrated, holistic approach to treatment. These efforts can thereby prevent premature and unwanted deaths and improve quality of life."

About the World Allergy Organization

The *World Allergy Organization (WAO)* is an international alliance of 89 regional and national allergy, asthma and immunology societies. Through collaboration with its Member Societies WAO provides a wide range of educational and outreach programs, symposia and lectureships to allergists/immunologists around the world and conducts initiatives related to clinical practice, service provision, and physical training in order to better understand and address the challenges facing allergists/immunologists worldwide. For more information, visit www.worldallergy.org.

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