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For Immediate Release

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Note to Media: See www.worldallergyweek.org for toll-free call-in to press teleconference events for journalists.



World Allergy Week Emphasizes Need for Food Labeling and Standardized Action Plans *Children Especially Affected by Food Sensitivity*

Milwaukee. Today the World Allergy Organization (WAO) launched World Allergy Week, together with its 93 national Member Societies, to address the topic of “Food Allergy – A Rising Global Health Problem,” and its growing burden on children. Food allergy significantly affects the daily quality of life of sufferers and can be life threatening. [1]

Globally, 220-250 million people may suffer from food allergy, and the occurrence of food allergies continues to rise in both developed and developing countries – especially in children, where the incidence is estimated to be 5-8% compared to adults at 1-2%. [1] WAO will address these public health challenges during two **press events to be held by teleconference today at 9:00 am EDT** (2:00 pm BST / UTC-GMT 13:00:00), and on Wednesday 10 April for the Asia Pacific region at 3:00 pm JST (11:30 am IST / UTC-GMT 06:00:00).

“Food sensitivity is not a simple disease,” said Professor Motohiro Ebisawa, Chair of the WAO Communications Council. “It has been increasing in severity and complexity. There are complications with food allergies caused by other allergic diseases such as asthma and atopic eczema. Moreover, food allergy can be fatal. All of these concerns point to the essential need for appropriate diagnosis as well as prevention measures such as food labeling, more clinical knowledge, and the resources to treat food allergy, including the availability of life-saving medications such as adrenaline,” he said.

The solutions to the rising problems associated with food sensitivity may not be simple either, but they can be accomplished with greater awareness to the issues, according to Professor Ruby Pawankar, WAO President. “Stakeholders must be prepared to meet the needs of patients by enhancing the diagnostic process, the traceability of responsible foods, and the availability of substitute foods as well as assisting hospitalized patients and preventing mortality. Large areas in the world lack legislation on food labeling, standardized national anaphylaxis action plans for food allergy, or access to adrenaline autoinjectors. These circumstances can be improved with the distribution of information and resources for physicians, patients, parents, schools, health ministries, and throughout communities and by a call to action to policy makers,” she said.

[1] Fiocchi A, Sampson HA et al. “Food Allergy”, Section 2.5 in *WAO White Book on Allergy*, Editors: R Pawankar, GW Canonica, ST Holgate, RF Lockey (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: World Allergy Organization, 2011), pp 47-53.

About the World Allergy Organization

The *World Allergy Organization (WAO)* is an international alliance of 93 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 and clinical 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 allergy and immunology professionals worldwide. For more information, visit www.worldallergy.org.

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