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EFAnews

3
2001

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The right to breathe healthy indoor air in schools

During the Sixth EFA Conference (Stockholm, Sweden, 7-9 June 2001) the general assembly recognised indoor air quality in schools as a priority topic. Therefore, the efforts of EFA will concentrate on proposing and promoting measures that will improve the air quality in our children's schools.

The Stockholm meeting gathered together the various persons involved in asthma and allergy prevention: doctors, policy decision makers, technical experts and, last but not least, the patients and their representatives. It emerged from discussions that there was an urgent need to put into force policies to counteract the increase in the prevalence of asthma and allergy in children. The increase in these disorders seen in westernised countries is much too fast to be attributed to genetic factors alone; the indoor and outdoor environment must play a role in this epidemic. There are slightly more than 71 million students and nearly 4.5 million teachers in the

primary and secondary schools in the EU, representing over 20% of the total population. In half of the European countries, children spend over 800 hours a year in class, that is about one-third of their typical day. They must have the right to breathe healthy indoor air

EFA plans to alert European and overseas authorities to this problem. The EFA network is an essential component of this strategy. We call upon all EFA member associations to make improving indoor air quality in schools a priority topic at national level. We ask you to use your strength and influence to bring this problem to the attention of the relevant authorities in your country, e.g. the ministries of public health, education and environment.

No child should risk becoming ill or having exacerbation of symptoms because of the quality of air in the school environment.

*Erkka Valovirta
Mariadelaide Franchi*

Dear Friends,

During the year 2000 and the beginning of 2001, EFA was largely engaged on the 'Indoor Air Quality in Schools' project, financed by the European Commission DG-SANCO. This was the first attempt to evaluate the magnitude of the problem in Europe and to propose recommendations to improve indoor air quality in the school environment. An important aspect of the project was the generous and unstinting support given by volunteers, experts, and representatives of scientific societies without whose help, the project would not have been so successful.

The project resulted in a 178-page report, which has been condensed in a 16-page leaflet for easy distribution. Both publications have been sent to EFA member associations; please use these documents to alert public opinion, students, parents, and the relevant authorities to the problem of indoor air quality in schools.

We shall be happy to send you further copies of these and other EFA publications upon request.

Mariadelaide Franchi

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Allergenicity Database

The Institute for Health and Consumer Protection (IHCP) of the Joint Research Centre in Ispra (Varese, Italy) has discussed the need for a specific database of protein sequences involved in allergenicity. The need for a structural database and the need for a uniform database of clinical trials was also discussed. Guy Van den Eede, head of the Genetically Modified Organisms project, chaired a meeting with 21 world-wide experts from industry, the academic world and from consumer groups. EFA was represented by Mariadelaide Franchi.

Participants reviewed the databases that are now accessible through the world-wide web. They agreed there is a need to review and update entries in these databases and to make a comprehensive database that includes links to clinical trials and to cross-reactivities. It was concluded that a broad group of experts and lay people would benefit from a unique database, placed on-line. Therefore, the work required was broken down in work packages. Four work areas were identified. These will be elaborated further in smaller working groups and will be combined into one large project. Once finalised, the project will be submitted to various groups/organisations for financial support.

Guy Van den Eede, Health and Consumer Protection, European Commission

Allergy - Living & Learning

Copenhagen, Denmark. 4 October 2001

The conclusions from the ALK-Abelló A/S (Denmark) and EFA collaborative pan-European patient perception study 'Allergy - Living & Learning' (ALL) were surprising. ALL paints a dramatic picture of the massive impact allergy has on the quality-of-life for more than 80 million people in Europe with this problem.

On 4 October 2001, ALK-Abelló will host a meeting in Copenhagen for a number of EFA representatives, physicians and the press to circulate further the conclusions of the ALL study. Local ALK-Abelló offices are in contact with EFA member organisations and a broad European representation is expected at the meeting.

'We are very happy to have this opportunity of sharing new conclusions from the ALL data and to discussing past and future activities aimed at disseminating these data', said Erkka Valovirta, EFA President.

The ALL meeting will be held in connection with ALK-Abelló's *4th Symposium on Specific Allergy* where more than 400 allergy experts from around the globe have confirmed their participation.

Managing Natural Pollutants Indoor

The MaNaPi project, which started December 2000, has resulted in version 1.0 of AllerSan, a software product that aims to make indoor environmental health risks more evident. AllerSan consists of: 1) a European-wide overview of geographically determined health risks, in which the user may compare and select local patterns; and 2) a dwelling plan in which users can add the sizes of their own home and adapt ventilation, habitation and habits, and simulate the allergen, irritant and oncogen levels. They can change the ventilation and/or other parameters, and see the effect the changes have on indoor pollution. Geographical data on building, habitation and other parameters were obtained from over 30 volunteers in Europe.

Version 1.0 is the first full version; it may be downloaded from internet (www.phe.nl) and is available on CD-ROM. Contact: E. Rameckers, MD Maastrichterweg 10, 6277 NW Slenaken, The Netherlands. e-mail: e.m.a.l.rameckers@allergo.nl

L.G.H. Koren



