

the Consortium

QUARTERLY



St. Louis Regional **Asthma Consortium**

Summer 2006

Volume IV, Issue 2

general membership meeting

Dr. Craig Wegner, head of Pfizer's Allergy & Respiratory Research Division, gave the keynote address at the Asthma Consortium's General Membership Meeting in June. Dr. Wegner talked about *How Pharmaceutical Researchers are Working to Meet Unmet Patient Needs*. He described the many steps taken by pharmaceutical companies to get a great idea off the ground and onto the pharmacy shelves.

According to Dr. Wegner, it takes 11 to 15 years to develop a new medication. The process begins by first identifying patients' needs through such means as viewpoint sessions and regular contact with physicians. Pharmaceutical companies invest an average of \$20 million before a new medication can even be considered a candidate for testing on humans. After extensive research, the drug candidate goes through a clinical trial process that adds another \$5,000,000 to the price tag. Only 2 drugs out of 120 will make it from the conceptual stage to a patient's medicine cabinet. The low success rate stems from a multitude of factors, such as the molecular targets, efficacy, side effects, absorption or elimination of the drug, patent issues, or even the inability to conduct clinical trials.

Dr. Wegner predicts that the current gold standard for asthma treatment will not change for decades to come, but he envisions the development of new medications for patients who are steroid-resistant. He expects that physicians will eventually have



a new arsenal of drugs that can be more specific in how they decrease respiratory inflammation. This would be exciting news for the 20.3 million Americans who have asthma, especially those who do not get optimal results from current treatments.

More photos from the General Membership Meeting on page 3

*Dr. Craig Wegner,
Keynote Speaker*

new member spotlight

The St. Louis Regional Asthma Consortium is pleased to announce the appointment of **Kellye Holtgrave, RPh** to its Board of Directors as a Member-at-Large. Ms. Holtgrave, a graduate of the St. Louis College of Pharmacy, has worked in various capacities for Walgreens since 1985. She began as a camera clerk, then worked her way up to technician, pharmacist, and eventually to pharmacy manager. In June 2003 Ms. Holtgrave was promoted to pharmacy supervisor for the Central district. She is a member of the Missouri Pharmacist Association as well as the Illinois Pharmacist Association.



Ms. Holtgrave is looking forward to the challenges presented by her new position. She stated, "In my profession, we see patients, especially children, on a daily basis who are affected by asthma. I am extremely excited to be a part of the Asthma Consortium and the differences we can make together in the treatment and awareness of asthma."

Ms. Holtgrave has been an integral part of the consortium's *Asthma Friendly Pharmacy* program and has contributed much to its success. As a pharmacist, she has a professional stake in helping her customers who have asthma. As a mother of a child with asthma, she also has a personal commitment to successful management of this disease. Having this dual perspective gives Ms. Holtgrave a unique insight, which she is eager to share with her new colleagues on the Board of Directors.

"Kellye Holtgrave is a tremendous addition to the consortium. Her knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry, her close contact with pharmacy customers, and her first-hand experience with the effects of asthma on individuals and their family will be instrumental in moving the consortium forward and in furthering its mission in this ever-changing health care environment," says Susie Schau, executive director of the Asthma Consortium.

Ms. Holtgrave is an active community volunteer, giving her time to the Girl Scouts and the Parent Teacher Organization at her children's school. The school also employs Ms. Holtgrave as the Cheerleading coach and Pep Club advisor. The Asthma Consortium welcomes Ms. Holtgrave and looks forward to the energy and enthusiasm she will undoubtedly bring to the organization.

calendar

- September 23rd & 24th** AARC Asthma Educator Certification Preparatory Course, Sponsored by Barnes-Jewish Hospital's Respiratory Care Services
- September 29th** Institute Salutes Community Champions Gala Sponsored by the Institute for Family Medicine
- October 24th** The Asthma Consortium's Annual Meeting and elections
- November 15th** World COPD Day
- April 21st, 2007** American Lung Association of Missouri's Asthma Walk



Please visit our website, www.asthma-stlouis.org, to learn more about these events or to view a complete list of SLRAC activities and committee meetings. If you have an upcoming event that you would like for us to consider posting on the newsletter calendar, contact Lucy Reinhart at lrinhart@asthma-stlouis.org.

• **September 9, 2006** •
The Advocacy Committee will provide free asthma screenings at the Village Church Renaissance Wellness Fair from 10:00 – 3:00.

Can Inhaled Corticosteroids Prevent Asthma in High Risk Children?

For some time now, school age children have successfully controlled their asthma symptoms by using inhaled corticosteroids but have not been able to prevent the progressive decline in lung function, which occurs with asthma. This got researchers thinking. Could inhaled corticosteroids help prevent the onset of asthma in preschoolers who are at risk for developing the disease? Researchers at five clinical centers across the country, including Washington University School of Medicine, decided to find out.

The Prevention of Early Asthma in Kids (PEAK) clinical trial studied 285 children, two or three years of age, who had experienced at least four episodes of wheezing in the year prior to the double-blind study. The wheezing had to be accompanied by other risk factors, such as family history, atopic dermatitis, or allergic rhinitis. For two years, half the children received an inhaled corticosteroid and the other half a placebo. This period was followed by one medication-free year of observation.

What did the researchers learn? On a positive note, the study confirmed that inhaled corticosteroids are effective in treating wheezing in young children. It was encouraging to learn that this benefit did not come at the expense of severely reduced growth rates in the participants. Although the inhaled corticosteroid group averaged slower gains in height during the treatment period, the children that received medication were able to partially catch up with the control group by the end of the treatment-free observation period.

Researchers were, however, disappointed to find that inhaled corticosteroids did not head off further progression of asthma symptoms or changes in lung function during the observation year without active treatment, as measured by days without symptoms and the need for additional asthma medications. In fact, children who received and responded well to medication during the two years of treatment did not fare quite as well as the placebo group during the observation year. Researchers, noting that both cohorts had similar degrees of symptoms during that latter part of the study, did not interpret this to mean that the inhaled corticosteroids made the children's conditions worse.

To learn more about the PEAK study, read the related article in the May 11, 2006 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine* (<http://content.nejm.org/>).

Scenes from the General Membership Meeting



Nina Westhus



David Sterling



Mary Homan

Missouri Foundation for Health Grant

The St. Louis Regional Asthma Consortium has been awarded a two-year basic support grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health. The Missouri Foundation for Health is a philanthropic organization whose vision is to improve the health of the people in the communities it serves. SLRAC will receive close to \$100,000 during the grant period.

"Getting this grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health will allow us the opportunity to access additional resources and expand our organization's outreach in the community," says Asthma Consortium Co-Chair, Viviane McKay. "We can focus more on broadening our community efforts and enhancing our name recognition in the region. We want the public to look to us to for high quality asthma information and for assistance in connecting individuals with the health services they need. These additional funds will give the Consortium more flexibility in how it serves people with asthma in the metro area. We are grateful to the Missouri Foundation for Health for its generous support."

According to a study done in Australia, thunderstorms that roll in during the summer months, when pollen levels tend to be high, can trigger asthma episodes. Researchers think that temperature changes during a thunderstorm can cause high levels of pollen to be released. Moisture from the rain breaks the pollen down into tiny particles. This makes it possible for a lot of pollen to make its way to the lungs, sometimes triggering an asthma episode. If you would like to read more, go to <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/5072530.stm>

Diet might be a risk factor for asthma, and one that can easily be controlled. A British study found that patients with asthma symptoms ate less fruit than a control group. Study participants who ate at least 46.3 grams of citrus fruit daily—an orange would be more than enough—cut their risk for having asthma symptoms in half. Adequate vitamin C and manganese consumption appeared to have an effect on keeping asthma in check. Researchers also discovered that study participants with asthma flare-ups had lower vitamin C plasma levels than the healthy subjects in the control group. For more information see the May 2006 edition of *Thorax*. <http://thorax.bmjournals.com/content/vol61/issue5/>.

Welcome

The Asthma Consortium welcomes these new members to the organization.

Rama Aysola

Ravi Aysola, *Washington University School of Medicine*

Colleen Beckwith, *St. Louis County Department of Health*

Lisa Campbell, *Patient/Family Advocate Best Practices Committee, AstraZeneca*

Erica Fendler, *St. Louis Community Air Project / SLACO*

Kellye Holtgrave, *Walgreens*

Mary Homan, *Saint Louis University*

Genevieve Stransky, *Merck*

Thank You

Thank you to the following organizations and companies for their in-kind donations and/or financial support!

AstraZeneca

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Missouri and Wisconsin

Circuit City

GlaxoSmithKline

Missouri Foundation for Health

Pfizer St. Louis

Our Mission

The Consortium's mission is to close the gap that exists between people affected by asthma and the knowledge and services that will help them.

Our Vision

To bring together the wealth of talent and resources in the St. Louis metropolitan area to improve the health and quality of life of people living with asthma.

Want to have a say in your Consortium?

Join the committee of your choice by email at Ireinhart@asthma-stlouis.org or go to the website for more information at www.asthma-stlouis.org.



St. Louis Regional **Asthma Consortium**

Salus Center
3545 Lafayette, Suite 300
St. Louis, MO 63104

Susie Schau
Executive Director
314-977-3273
sschau@asthma-stlouis.org

Lucy Reinhart
Administrative Coordinator
314-977-4006
Ireinhart@asthma-stlouis.org

Julie Durchholz
Administrative Assistant
314-977-4006
jdurchholz@asthma-stlouis.org