

Education

GA²LEN ADCARE – RESPONDING TO THE NEED FOR ONGOING EDUCATION IN ATOPIC DERMATITIS FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS GLOBALLY AND CURRENTLY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Effective continuing education in dermatology for healthcare providers can be supported by various measures such as literature, webinars, online tools and lectures. The Global Allergy and Asthma European Network (GA²LEN) has developed a compact training programme on allergic diseases, including but not limited to atopic dermatitis, alopecia areata, allergic rhinitis, asthma, pruritus, angioedema, urticaria and anaphylaxis and food allergy. In this article we present the impact of and argue for the continuing need for GA²LEN training programmes on the basis of a review of data from the past six global educational programmes. These data indicate the efficacy of ongoing education and the updating of healthcare professionals' knowledge and the need for continuing education in South Africa.

Keywords: education, atopic dermatitis, alopecia areata, training programme, GA²LEN ADCARE

INTRODUCTION

The Global Allergy and Asthma European Network (GA²LEN) is a network of excellence of the leading European clinical and research facilities in the field of allergology and asthma. This network was born from and is partnered with the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI); it is also a collaboration partner of the European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA). Started under

the European Union Sixth Framework Programme for Research, GA²LEN became a model project in Europe. It responds to the growing public-health concern about allergic diseases.

Research teams taking part in the GA²LEN network were chosen for their scientific excellence, their record of multidisciplinary operations and international collaboration and also their

TABLE I: A LIST OF PAST GA²LEN EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

DATE	COUNTRY	TOPIC
6 April 2019	Malaysia	AD
7 April 2019	Malaysia	Urticaria
23 November 2018	Barcelona	AR
24 November 2018	Barcelona	Urticaria
9 June 2018	Seoul	Allergy
10 June 2018	Seoul	Urticaria

educational activities. Since its launch, GA²LEN has grown to include an additional 70 collaborating centres, making it one of the largest multidisciplinary networks of researchers in the field of allergy and asthma worldwide. Since 2007, the network has continued successfully in the form of a self-sustainable and constantly expanding non-profit organisation.

GA²LEN ADCARE is a CORE (Centres of Reference and Excellence) sub-network of GA²LEN, its focus being on atopic dermatitis (AD). At present there are 54 GA²LEN Atopic Dermatitis Centres of Reference and Excellence (ADCAREs) worldwide and the network continues to expand.

GA²LEN has been providing educational programmes of a high standard globally since 2006. The participant feedback from past programmes has been positive and has reassured us that there is both an ongoing demand and an urgent need for frequent updates of knowledge in the area of AD.

The continuing education of healthcare providers (HCPs) allows them to keep up to date with both the current and the innovative approaches in medicine. This can be achieved through various measures, which include publications, online tools, self-evaluation and lectures. But information on the impact of education is not yet widespread – especially not that on the level of knowledge gained by HCPs who treat allergic patients. But there is no doubt that the expansion of continuing professional development (CPD) is urgently needed.¹

The most prevalent and effective form of continuing medical education for healthcare providers in the field of allergy has been shown to be a combination of lectures by experts, including those on co-morbidities by expert specialists, and an examination based on the learning materials.

GA²LEN has developed education programmes covering many specific allergic diseases, including but not limited to AD, asthma, allergic rhinitis (AR), pruritus, angioedema and urticaria. Recent additions to the programme include food allergy and anaphylaxis.

The GA²LEN one-day and one-and-a-half-day intensive education programmes consist of six to eight main lectures on the pathophysiology, diagnostics, comorbidities, clinical picture, quality of life (QoL) impairment and treatment options for the disease. Included in these programmes are hands-on training sessions and question-and-answer sessions in which healthcare

providers interact with faculty members in smaller groups. The faculty of the GA²LEN education programmes generally consists of three specialists, who jointly develop the agenda, the content and the examination for the GA²LEN Diploma of Excellence. The programmes and the examinations are then reviewed and approved by the scientific committee for educational events.

At the beginning and the end of the GA²LEN education programmes, the participants take part in a multiple-choice examination (30 questions) within an allotted time. Those participants who answer at least 70 per cent of the latter set of examination questions correctly are subsequently awarded a GA²LEN Diploma of Excellence for the topic of that educational training event.

The common goal of GA²LEN educational events is to fill knowledge gaps with up-to-date education from specialists in topics related to disease. These events support HCPs in self-evaluating their present knowledge; they also encourage discussion with key opinion leaders and support HCPs to retain knowledge to help their patients. At present, we focus on encouraging new members from South Africa to join the ADCARE network in order to improve collaboration in this region, to harmonise healthcare standards for AD in South Africa and to make updated knowledge of AD available through HCP participation in GA²LEN's educational programmes and events.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

PARTICIPANTS IN THE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Participants in the education programme are HCPs from the region and surrounding regions in which an educational event takes place. Healthcare providers can attend free of charge and they receive electronic learning packs and handouts, a certificate of attendance and a diploma of excellence if they have passed the examination. The number of participants for a one-and-a-half-day educational programme is generally about 100, but it can range up to 350.

THE GA²LEN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

Six past GA²LEN educational events are listed in Table I.

The following is an example of the standard structure of a GA²LEN education programme:

- Participants are welcomed and given a short introduction to GA²LEN, its founding history and present framework.
- Participants are then invited to take the pre-training examination to test their present knowledge.
- Lectures and talks are completed in the morning session, followed by a hands-on workshop.
- After a midday break, the participants continue their learning, which includes familiarisation with case studies and international guidelines and question-and-answer rounds with the faculty.
- After all the talks, lectures and workshops are completed, the participants are invited to take a second knowledge examination.
- After the allotted time is complete, the participants are given the correct answers to the examinations along with the rationale for them.
- During the final winding-up discussion session, the support

TABLE II: SELECTED QUOTED ANONYMOUS FEEDBACK EXAMPLES FROM PREVIOUS GA²LEN ONE-DAY TRAINING PROGRAMMES

EVENT	FEEDBACK
Seoul, Korea 9–10 June 2018	'Please invite me again.'
Seoul, Korea 9–10 June 2018	'I hope that there will be another chance to join.'
Seoul, Korea 9–10 June 2018	'Regularly updated evidence and information will always be needed – excellent event!'
Barcelona, Spain 23–24 November 2018	'Thank you for a great event and venue and many thanks for the sponsorship ... it is a big privilege to attend and learn from world key opinion leaders.'
Barcelona, Spain 23–24 November 2018	'I really learnt a lot. I am very grateful for the opportunity.'
Barcelona, Spain 23–24 November 2018	'More GA ² LEN schools please.'
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 6–7 April 2019	'Eager to learn other allergy-related topics, for example, allergic conjunctivitis, ENT and asthma updates.'
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 6–7 April 2019	'The GA ² LEN speakers from Denmark and Germany were excellent. Very definite in what they spoke and obviously authorities in allergic rhinitis and urticaria. Would like to see more speakers of this stature coming to Malaysia in the future.'
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 6–7 April 2019	'... very informative and helpful in my practice.'

team collate and evaluate the results and pass marks of each participant and a GA²LEN Diploma of Excellence is produced, ready for the participant to collect at the end of the educational event, together with the certificate of attendance.

EXAMINATION

The GA²LEN examination is uploaded onto a digital platform. This digital form of testing allows participants to access the examination from their own laptops or smartphones without the use of paper or additional equipment. In addition, all the examination questions are randomised in their sequence to prevent plagiarism.

Fifteen minutes is allowed for participants to answer the questions set. After the allotted time has passed, the digital platform is closed and the examination is no longer available to answer.

RESULTS

The pre- and post-training knowledge test is conducted at every GA²LEN educational event and training programme. In Figure 1 below the results of the pre- and post-event examinations from the past six events listed in Table I are presented. Figure 1 shows a significant increase in the participants' knowledge pre- and post-training of the GA²LEN educational events on the topics of AD and urticaria. The sum of each event's results, including both topics, show that on average only 38% of participants who took the pre-training test received a passing grade as compared to 81% of participants who passed the examination post-event. It was noted that active participation in training programmes also resulted in a significant increase in the questions answered correctly as compared to the results of passive training programmes.

In addition, anonymous participant feedback on the educational programme is welcomed and voluntarily given in a written format following the conclusion of the programme. The feedback received on GA²LEN educational programmes is highly positive and supports the need for ongoing future educational training events. Listed in Table II are selected feedback quotations

that were relevant to quality and express the need for further GA²LEN training programmes in the future.

DISCUSSION

By performing a knowledge test before and after a GA²LEN educational programme, an HCP can see the immediate increase in their knowledge and in their ability to implement this newly acquired knowledge in their day-to-day clinical practice.

Our collection of pre- and post-training knowledge test data from previous events indicates that GA²LEN educational programmes are impactful and a necessary resource in the allergy and dermatology sector of healthcare. In accordance with the continuous need for education and global communication on acquired knowledge in medicine, GA²LEN has organised and successfully run the ADCARE AcADEmy educational programme which took place on 6 May 2022 in Cape Town, South Africa.

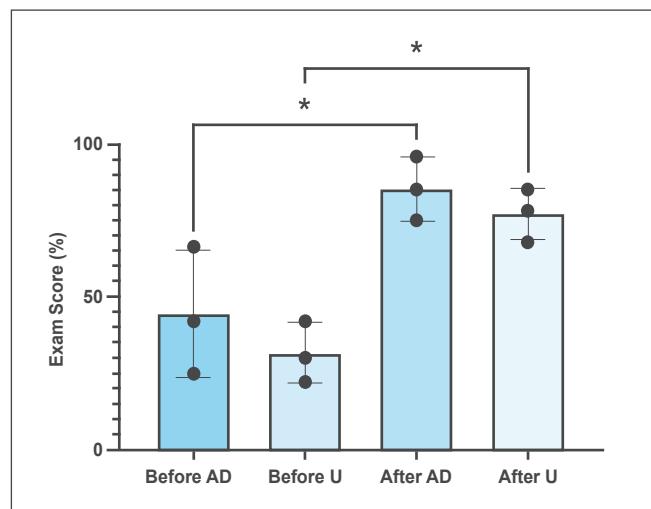


Figure 1: A chart describing the knowledge examination results on the topics of AD and urticaria (U), pre- and post-GA²LEN education programmes, from the past six events listed in Table I. The analysis was conducted using one-way ANOVA, where a result <0.05 is considered statistically significant.

A second educational training programme in South Africa is planned for Autumn 2022. Further details about this second educational programme can be found at www.allergy-school.com.² The aim of these two educational training programmes in South Africa is to deal with the problems related to AD that are considered common or very common in Africa. These problems include a lack of information about the disease among the local population and primary care workers, limited access to medical care and a lack of proper training of HCPs, as stated in the Position Statement on Atopic Dermatitis in Sub-Saharan Africa: Current Status and Roadmap by Schmid-Grendelmeier et al.³

Based on our analysis of the successful measures in past educational programmes and the feedback acquired from the training participants, we conclude that the GA²LEN training programmes on selected allergic diseases are an effective and positive means of improving levels of knowledge of these diseases for HCPs. There is a clear need to promote and expand the use of the GA²LEN training programmes.⁴

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Ingrid van Hofman, Katarina Stevanovic and Cathrin Meesch, Carsten Bindslev-Jensen and Giorgio Walter Canonica have no conflict of interest. Antonella Muraro has received honoraria (advisory board, speaker) from Aimmune, DVB, Novartis, ALK, Nestlé Health Science and Nestlé Purina. Nikos Papadopoulos has received honoraria (advisory board, speaker) from ALK, Asit Biotech, AstraZeneca, Biomay, Boehringer Ingelheim, GSK, HAL, Faes Farma, Medscape, Menarini, MSD, Mylan/Meda, Novartis, Nutricia, OM Pharma, Regeneron, Sanofi and

Takeda. Nikos Papadopoulos also reports the following research support: Gerolymatos Int., Capricare, Nutricia. Marcus Maurer is or recently was a speaker and/or advisor for and/or has received research funding from Allakos, Alnylam, Amgen, Aralez, ArgenX, AstraZeneca, BioCryst, Blueprint, Celldex, Centogene, CSL Behring, Dyax, FAES, Genentech, GIInnovation, Innate Pharma, Kalvista, Kyowa Kirin, Leo Pharma, Lilly, Menarini, Moxie, Novartis, Pfizer, Pharming, Pharvaris, Roche, Sanofi/Regeneron, Shire/Takeda, Third Harmonic Bio, UCB, and Uriach. Jonny Peter reports speaker fees from CSL Behring, Takeda, Johnson and Johnson, Novartis and Glenmark pharmaceuticals and educational grant funding from Novartis and Takeda. Torsten Zuberbier has received honoraria (advisory board, speaker) from AstraZeneca, AbbVie, ALK-Abelló, Almirall, Astellas, Bayer Health Care, Bencard, Berlin Chemie, FAES, HAL, Henkel, Kryolan, Leti, Lofarma, L'Oréal, Meda, Menarini, Merck, MSD, Novartis, Pfizer, Sanofi, Sanoflore, Stallergenes, Takeda, Teva and UCB. Torsten Zuberbier also reports the following organisational affiliations: Committee member, WHO-Initiative 'Allergic Rhinitis and Its Impact on Asthma' (ARIA); Member of the Board, German Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (DGAKI); Head, European Centre for Allergy Research Foundation (ECARF); President, Global Allergy and Asthma European Network (GA²LEN); Member, Committee on Allergy Diagnosis and Molecular Allergology, World Allergy Organization (WAO).

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