

Editorial

This special issue of *Vaccine* is dedicated to the Second European Influenza Conference. The conference, which took place in Malta from 11 to 14 September 2005,¹ brought together 795 scientists, opinion leaders in health care work, government representatives and policy makers in a unique concept. It was organised by ESWI,² a multidisciplinary group of key opinion leaders in influenza. ESWI aims to reduce the impact of epidemic and pandemic influenza in the European population by identifying and communicating with stakeholders and by facilitating interactions between them.

The conference concept was innovative. Indeed, for the first time, influenza was not only discussed from a scientific perspective. Opinion leaders in health care work, government representatives and policy makers were also recognized as influenza stakeholders and were offered separate programme tracks. These included tailor-made lectures and workshops on all relevant aspects of the disease. In addition, specific sessions brought together the entire influenza stakeholder community, including representatives of influenza vaccine and antivirals manufacturers. These sessions focussed on information exchange and interaction among all participants, and resulted in highly interesting new visions on the ongoing fight against epidemic and pandemic influenza in Europe.

Given the conference concept, these proceedings have been created to differ from “classic” conference proceedings. They not only reflect the presentations made by scientists, but also the interaction within and between the different groups of participants: scientists, health care workers, government representatives and policy makers. The workshops and plenary sessions were covered by reporters who translated the discussions and points of view in a series of comprehensive and highly accessible articles.

This outcome builds upon the conference’s innovative concept, as its objective indeed was not only to provide infor-

mation on the scientific state of the art on influenza and to gather stakeholders’ points of view, but also to discuss concrete actions with respect to reducing the impact of epidemic and pandemic influenza in Europe.

Because of this unique approach, these proceedings go far beyond the usual inventory of interesting scientific work presented during the conference. This issue of *Vaccine* indeed provides a lively report of the enriching interactions among all influenza stakeholders, and links these to a concrete outcome: the establishment of a European Influenza Taskforce.

It therefore is a solid basis for further actions that will contribute to Europe’s preparedness for a pandemic outbreak and prevention strategy for seasonal flu.

The realisation of this issue of *Vaccine* was made possible through the combined efforts of ESWI, Link Inc. communication consultants, the authors of the respective articles and the reporters.

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Available online 12 June 2006*

¹ www.eswiconference.org.

² www.eswi.org.