



2009 Global Liver Summit
L Hotel
São Paulo, SP – Brazil
12-14 March

Participants:

Latin-American Association for the Study of the Liver

Angelo Alves de Mattos, MD - President
Milagros Davalos, MD - 1nd Vice-President
Nahum Mendes-Sanches, MD - 2nd Vice-President
Cláudio Marroni, MD – Secretary
Edna Strauss, MD – Councillor / Delegate

European Association for the Study of the Liver

Jean-Michel Pawlotsky, MD, PhD, Secretary General
Heiner Wedemeyer, MD – Vice-Secretary
Peter Jansen, MD PhD – Education Committee

American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases

Scott Friedman MD, President

Asian Pacific Association for the Study of the Liver

Masao Omata, MD – Board Member – accepted the invitation, but cancelled one month before the meeting.
Jidong Jia, MD – President – was invited (by e-mail) – with no answer
Seng Gee Lim, MD – Education Committee - attempted, but unable to attend

Main Objectives -

Enhance coordination and synergy among the Continental Associations
Expand mutual understanding of regional differences and provide mutual assistance in achieving respective goals of the Associations

March 13th

The meeting was convened at 9 AM

Minutes of the Meeting

1. Welcome from the President of ALEH and Introduction

Dr. Angelo Mattos welcomed all meeting members and highlighted the need for a more solid organization and development of ALEH. The board members are initiating a program on Medical Education and advancing the organization of multicenter studies on the epidemiology of liver diseases in Latin America. Reference centers are to be linked in order to provide training courses for young physicians. There is also a plan to edit a book on liver diseases. The biannual meeting of ALEH will occur from 12 to 14 August, 2010 in Porto Alegre, in the south of Brazil. Dr. Mattos solicited suggestions for improving the structural organization of ALEH and cooperation of both EASL and AASLD in the postgraduate course during the Meeting.

2. Society Information

EASL leadership reviewed the success of the association in recent years. Unlike ALEH, EASL is not a federation of national associations but rather an association of European members. Priority for election to the governing board continues to be given to young people (less than 45) but older members are accepted in the Education Committee, and their experience was welcomed. The resources from industry are centralized and used according to scientific criteria by the board members. Professional administration by was started 15 years ago, with very good results and now a permanent headquarters has been established in Geneva, Switzerland managed by full time EASL professionals.

AASLD has had a professional structure for many years with a permanent headquarters, and recently purchased their own office space rather than renting. Active participation by the Governing Board and sixteen Committees, along with a full time staff of 26 individuals, generates numerous activities during the year including Annual Meeting. Priorities in the scientific activities and fund raising were recently discussed. There is a trend towards less dependence on pharmaceutical resources and increased efforts in procuring donations from organizations, members and other individuals. Dr. Friedman confirmed that Canadians are full members, not International members, and Canadian participation in the Association's activities is strong. In the past Mexico was also incorporated, but has been incorporated into Latin American Association in 1986.

ALEH was founded in 1968 in Sao Paulo congregating initially only Argentina, Brasil, Chile and Venezuela. Although those countries continued to be the more influential, ALEH expanded about 20 years ago to incorporate all of South and Central America, including Mexico. The national groups of hepatologists linked by their associations, clubs or units of hepatology constitute their members. Besides the governing board, which includes the two next presidents, each country has a delegate who represents the members of their country for political and administrative decisions. A regular meeting is held in different countries every two years and other activities are conducted, depending on the ability of the president to raise funds and coordinate the priorities decided by the board. ALEH does not have a fixed secretary or standing account. Recently an official Scientific Journal (from Mexico, but written in English) was established and is sent to members. The idea of electing Uruguay as a permanent ALEH headquarters was discussed, similar to the EASL office in Switzerland. EASL and AASLD have strongly suggested the adoption of a professional manager for ALEH. Initially, a 'virtual' small office could assist in running the association at low expense.

3. **Hepatology and its links to Gastroenterology, Endoscopy, and related areas.**
 Hepatology is a specialty independent from Gastroenterology in only very few countries, two of which are in Eastern Europe. In Europe every country has its rules and EASL does not interfere. In the US, Hepatology is part of Gastroenterology and for its training the young physicians have to start with Internal Medicine, continue with Gastroenterology and then a special year or two of Hepatology. Some progress may occur to allow dedication to liver diseases within the three-year gastroenterology fellowship. It is thought that learning and practicing endoscopy remains important for hepatologists. Few physicians are dedicated exclusively to the study and treat liver diseases. Infections diseases and Oncology are also within the scope of Hepatology, for the treatment of both viral hepatitis and liver cancer. The relationships are not well defined, but training in these areas is necessary.

4. **Career Development workshops**
 AASLD continues to expand the “**Special Interest Groups**” that meet together during the annual meeting, which has generated great interest among participants. SIGs have helped establish a network among people working in the same research field. A group on Hepatitis C has not been created yet, since it is likely to be the largest and therefore the most challenging to manage. Nonetheless, the concept of the SIGs is viewed as a success.
Monothematic conferences continue to attract participants in Europe whereas in the United States it depends on the scope of the conference. A new concept by AASLD “**Liver Week**” with the sequence of three different topics in the same venue. The basic structure would be the same, but the participants may vary according to the subject
 Another project that is working for EASL and could be developed by ALEH is the “**School of Hepatology**”. Funding comes from the association to a reference center with of the requirement to provide lectures and hands on experience for a small group of young physicians specifically interested in Hepatology.
 In the next year the **post-graduate Course of ALEH** will include its sister-associations EASL and AASLD. It was agreed that the main scope will be Hepatocellular Carcinoma and four speakers from each association will be sponsored to come to the meeting. For European speakers the month of August may not be suitable, due to family vacations. So, invitations must be made as early as possible, soon after the EASL meeting this year, to evaluate the speakers availability. **The integrity of clinical trials** is always a concern. There is a tendency to generate clinical trials supported solely by industry. On the other hand, the competition between pharmaceutical companies (example Roche and Schering Plough) was very good for the development of Hepatology. In near future other products will appear for liver cancer, creating similar competition with benefits to research and the associations. **Guidelines** on treatment of viral hepatitis (or other liver diseases) were also discussed, raising the possibility of creating a mechanism of unification within the continental associations to be developed in the future. The Brazilian Medical Association has a program of unification of guidelines, since all medical specialties participate in their establishment.

5. **Network of Centers of Hepatology in Latin America**
 Different from AASLD and EASL, the members of ALEH are mainly clinical physicians interested in the diagnosis and treatment of liver disease, with very little interest in basic research. Although basic science is developing in Latin American countries, our Hepatology associations still did not attract those scientists to become members. Training centers of Hepatology in Latin America could integrate to form a network and improve the level of this field in the continent. This is a challenge to the next presidents of ALEH

6. **Support of conferences in Africa and Latin America**
 Some efforts have been made in the past by EASL and AASLD to improve Hepatology development in Africa. Unfortunately, they must first organize themselves and solve local problems in order to be able to receive some help as a continent, although some groups, especially in Egypt and South Africa, are very active in Hepatology. For Latin America, the decision by EASL and AASLD is to give their help to the continental association – ALEH.

7. **Engagement of Industry,**
 The current global low economic profile is affecting the pharmaceutical industry, and our associations must adapt themselves to this new condition. The policy of being more independent and finding other sources of fundraising is supported by the associations.

8. **Structural problems of ALEH**
 As discussed previously, the lack of systematic fund raising, regular contribution of the members and no bank account has prevented ALEH from achieving a higher standard of development. A fixed secretarial staff in a neutral country where a bank account could be opened and the help of a professional manager organization will be a goal in the next years. A meeting with the secretarial staff of EASL in Copenhagen next month (April/09) will be arranged to learn more about how to achieve this goal. Nahum Mendes and Edna Strauss will represent ALEH to discuss these points and profit from EASL’s experience.

9. **The Global Summit Alliance and Future Meetings**
 The lack of participation of APASL in the three meetings of the Alliance held until now should be corrected. Since the other 3 associations have already hosted the meeting in the absence of APASL, the European association took the responsibility of organizing the next meeting in 2010. Most probably it will be held in Germany, with Frankfurt as the candidate city. Heiner Wedemayer will be the Secretary of EASL and will encourage APASL to attend this meeting.

All participants agreed the meeting was very profitable and worthwhile. The venue was convenient and a whole day discussion with a group dinner at night is a fruitful way to continue this Alliance

Meeting adjourned at 5 PM