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Lupus Congress 2010 Special Report

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All about the Latest Discoveries in Lupus Research and Management

A report from the 9th International Congress on Systemic Lupus Erythematosus in Vancouver, Canada.

This summer, researchers, clinicians, industry representatives, people with lupus and family members of those with lupus convened in Vancouver, Canada for the **9th International Congress on Systemic Lupus Erythematosus**. The **Alliance for Lupus Research (ALR)** was honored to have attended the meeting.

The International Congress on Systemic Lupus Erythematosus is unique in that it is the only international meeting of its kind dedicated solely to lupus. The Congress is held every three years in different locations around the world. This year's Congress, referred to as Lupus 2010, was the first ever on the West Coast of North America.

There were several key goals of Lupus 2010, which included identifying opportunities that exist for improving the lives of people with lupus based on the significant progress that has been made in lupus research education and care. Another goal of the meeting was to identify ways to narrow the gaps of lupus world-wide, support the next generation of lupus scientists and reduce barriers between lay and professional, different disciplines and different cultures. Attendees came to Vancouver eager to talk about lupus and ensure these goals were met by the end of the four-day Congress.

Plenary sessions, keynote discussions, poster sessions, workshops and educational courses filled the days in Vancouver, showcasing the latest developments in the management of systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), including the results of the most recent clinical trials -- many of which the ALR has previously reported on over the past several months. The meeting also highlighted recent discoveries into the basic causes of lupus and focused on strategies to ensure continued research and patient care funding given the economic troubles felt by so many across the globe. Most importantly, attendees at Lupus 2010 had opportunities to collaborate, identify future opportunities in research and develop plans for mentoring tomorrow's leaders in the field. People touched by lupus and other non-medical professionals were also provided an opportunity to attend the meeting and hear about the latest developments in lupus in a consumer-friendly forum.

More than 60 of the world's top lupus experts shared their research findings and discussed the future of lupus treatment and management.

The ALR commends its researchers for their continued dedication and commitment to lupus research!

25 Researchers funded by the ALR were invited speakers at Lupus 2010.

A Closer Look at the Topics Discussed at Lupus 2010

Lupus 2010 provided opportunities to talk about every aspect of the field, including the current state of lupus treatment and management, new treatment options for SLE, T-cells and lupus, B-cells in lupus, cardiovascular disease in lupus, outcomes in lupus, pregnancy and lupus, lupus in pediatric patients, lupus in women and the genetics of lupus.

Edward Wakeland, MD, a former ALR grant recipient, participated as a keynote speaker at the Congress. Using the results brought by the SLEGEN initiative that have associated more than 20 genomic segments with susceptibility in SLE; Dr. Wakeland and his team, have initiated deep sequencing studies of all of the genomic segments exhibiting suggestive or significant association with susceptibility to SLE.

Additionally, Brian Kotzin, MD, Vice President of Medical Sciences at Amgen and a former member of the ALR's Scientific Advisory Board, participated as a keynote speaker in a discussion about the pitfalls, including economic hardships, in the development of new lupus drugs. The session highlighted the long and intensive process of bringing new drug candidates from the lab to people touched by lupus, and focused on key challenges and gaps in the process. The discussion concluded on a positive note, though emphasized the importance of closing key gaps to enhance the success of transforming the therapy of lupus.

"It was truly a terrific and productive meeting with a lot of energy, and it was exciting to see so

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many people dedicated to lupus research come together from around the world to discuss the latest developments in the management and treatment of this devastating disease," explains **Peggy Crow, MD, Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Alliance for Lupus Research (ALR)**. "This is a very promising time for those touched by lupus, and the meeting was a great way for attendees to share information and discuss future opportunities in the field."

Research and Pipeline Drugs Highlighted

As showcased at Lupus 2010, researchers have been busy at work, and there are now many companies with lupus drug candidates in the pipeline. This is extremely promising as there has not been a new drug approved to treat lupus in several decades.

"After a 50 year interval since the last approval of a new therapy for lupus, adds Dr. Crow, there was a sense of real progress at the Congress about the changing lupus treatment landscape. The significant new research developments presented at the meeting suggest that the many patients with lupus can be hopeful that we will soon have additional strategies to manage this disease."

Drug candidates, including belimumab (Human Genome Sciences/GlaxoSmithKline; BENLYSTA®), epratuzumab (UCB/Immunomedics), rontalizumab (Genentech), rituximab (Genentech; RITUXAN®) and mycophenolate mofetil (CELLCEPT®), were discussed in-depth at the meeting – both in the sessions for medical professionals as well as in the sessions that were part of the patient program. Much of the drug candidate research has been previously released and reported on by the ALR over the past several months. More information about these drug candidates and others can be found [here](#).

Beyond the discussions about the drug candidates in the pipeline, there was significant other advancements in lupus research and management also discussed at the Congress. Many of these sessions were supported by industry leaders, including Bristol-Myers Squibb, EMD Serono, Human Genome Sciences, MedImmune and UCB. More information on these sessions can be found by visiting the Congress' Web site at www.lupus2010.com.

"It is fantastic to see the great interest and dedication to lupus research in 2010," says Dr. Crow. "Many companies are taking basic research and moving forward with clinical trials, which will hopefully one day soon result in additional therapies approved and available for people with lupus."

What does this all mean for people touched by lupus?

Researchers and other medical professionals are hard at work to find new lupus treatments and develop new management strategies. As a result, we are closer than ever to having new options. This is extremely promising, especially after decades with no new therapies available. With continued commitment to lupus research, we will see new advancements in the field near-term that will help improve the lives of those living with this debilitating disease.

The ALR looks forward to bringing you more on new lupus research developments in the coming months and beyond.

The ALR's Continued Commitment to Lupus Research

Over the past 10 years, the ALR has advanced pioneering lupus investigations and has achieved great progress in lupus research. For example, the ALR supported important basic and translational research on the molecule targeted by BENLYSTA, a B-cell stimulator also known as BLYS. This research helped lay the groundwork for BENLYSTA's clinical development program. The ALR has funded more than five million dollars in B-cell research over the past ten years. More information about B-cell research can be found [here](#).

To learn about other lupus drugs in development, click [here](#).

The Alliance for Lupus Research (ALR) is the world's largest charitable funder of lupus research. One hundred percent of all donations to the organization support innovative medical research programs to prevent, treat and cure SLE or lupus, as the Board of Directors funds all administrative and fundraising expenses. More information about lupus and the ALR is available at www.lupusresearch.org. You can also join the ALR community on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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Alliance for Lupus Research | 28 West 44th Street, Suite 501 | New York, NY 10036 | tel: 212.218.2840 | toll free: 800.867.1743 | email: info@lupusresearch.org



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