



# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

---

**Workshop on the Interaction between upper and lower  
airways - InterAirways Project -**

**/2**

**12 December 2006**

**San Diego, USA, 28 February-1 March 2007**

**Location: Convention Centre, Room 30A**

## **SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

### **Background**

Asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases (COPD), occupational pulmonary diseases and chronic rhinitis/rhino-sinusitis, are among the most common chronic diseases worldwide. These groups of respiratory diseases represent an enormous burden on individuals, families and societies, by their impact in quality of life and health resource utilization, as well as mortality. Although these respiratory problems frequently overlap, and the understanding of each of these conditions has advanced considerably, there exists so far no integrated analysis of what is known and what can be done to prevent and control such inter-related diseases. For example, allergic rhinitis and signs of inflammation of the paranasal sinuses are present in the majority of people with asthma. Infections of the upper respiratory tract are very common triggers of asthma exacerbations, and may also be associated with COPD exacerbations. These airways diseases share common features in pathophysiology and diagnosis but their treatment and management are frequently conducted in an undesirable independent manner.

InterAirways is a new project which aims at bridging the current gap through the development of a new integrated approach, taking into account the interaction between the upper and lower airways in health and diseases. The most important interactions include: rhinitis and asthma, occupational upper and lower airway diseases, infections of the upper respiratory tract and chronic lower airway diseases. Many publications have reviewed the subject in the past six years, and have called the attention of numerous health workers. However, a step forward remains necessary. In order to improve effectiveness, safety and compliance, as well as reduce risks of therapeutical interventions, a comprehensive and integrated approach to control these common illnesses is needed. Further evidence is also required, in particular with regard to the scale of the problem in populations of low and middle income countries. The objectives of the InterAirways Project are to: (i) update existing recommendations and documents; (ii) develop an evidence-based global document on epidemiology, risk factors, diagnosis, and integrated prevention and management; (iii) develop new documents emphasizing the current knowledge gaps that require investigational priority in middle and low-income countries, occupational airway diseases, as well as the impact of infections of the upper respiratory tract over chronic diseases of the lower airways; (iv) develop educational material for health care professionals and patients focusing particularly on the prevention of these common chronic respiratory diseases.

---

The InterAirways Workshop will approach issues in Chronic Respiratory Diseases of upper and lower airways, and the role of upper respiratory infections in exacerbations of asthma and COPD. The use of rhinitis diagnosis in promoting early asthma recognition as opposed to waiting for asthma to be considered when fully established will be discussed, as early diagnosis and proper prevention/management of upper airway diseases may reduce the chances of lower airway problems.

There will also be a focus on integrated prevention and management of chronic respiratory diseases, with input from both primary care physicians and patients' organizations. Representatives of leading research institutes and NGOs in the field will attend.

**The objectives of the InterAirways Workshop are:**

- To review existing recommendations and documents;
- To discuss the objectives proposed for the InterAirways project;
- To discuss and agree on proposals for an evidence-based global document on epidemiology, risk factors, diagnosis, and integrated prevention and management;
- To discuss and agree on proposals for new documents emphasizing the current knowledge gaps that require investigational priority in middle and low-income countries, occupational airway diseases and consequences of upper airway infections on the lower airways;
- To discuss and agree on the most appropriate strategies to implement the InterAirways Project;
- To discuss the development of educational material for health care professionals and patients focusing particularly on the prevention of these common respiratory diseases.

**The expected results of the InterAirways Workshop are:**

- Identification of needs for new recommendations, according to available evidence, taking into consideration currently available documents;
- Agreement on the objectives proposed for the InterAirways project;
- Agreement on draft proposals for an evidence-based global document on epidemiology, risk factors, diagnosis, and integrated prevention and management;
- Agreement on draft proposals of new documents emphasizing the current knowledge gaps that require investigational priority in middle and low-income countries, occupational airway diseases and consequences of upper airway infections on the lower airways;
- Identification and agreement on the most appropriate strategies to implement the InterAirway project;
- Agreement on proposals for development of educational material for health care professionals and patients focusing particularly on the prevention of these common respiratory diseases.