



INTERNATIONAL ECZEMA COUNCIL

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Letter from the IEC President



This is a busy time, and not just because we've already presented five live symposia this year! As I write this, your IEC leaders are undertaking a strategic planning process to define our organization's long-term goals and objectives and develop a plan to achieve them. Our existing strategic plan was reaching the end of its life, necessitating this work.

The new plan will enable us (and future board members) to make decisions that stay true to and further our mission and objectives. It will also help guide Alan Irvine in his stewardship of IEC as he steps into the presidency in 2024.

This process has helped us focus in on what is really important to our young organization. I look forward to sharing the results with you as soon as they are finalized.

Allergists Welcome!

Our Council is growing, as you'll see from news below about our Councilor & Associate infographic. What isn't noted is that a recent addition to the Council is **Ioana Agache**, MD PhD—our first allergist to join us as a Councilor.

Dr. Agache is professor of allergy and clinical immunology at Transylvania University in Brasov, Romania, and a past president of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. Her research in the field of asthma and allergy and clinical immunology focused on asthma phenotypes and endotypes, immune modulation and immune tolerance and integrated management of allergic diseases, with a special focus on primary care and community pharmacists. She contributes greatly to allergy and asthma guidelines and has edited several books on the topic and served as a journal editor.

We welcome Dr. Agache and hope to welcome more allergists to the IEC. We work hand in hand with allergists, and allergist researchers are furthering the evidence base for treatments. Consider the allergists with whom you work or network and encourage them to [apply to join the Council](#).

Success in Singapore

Thank you to each of you who contributed to or attended our activities held in Singapore in conjunction with the World Congress of Dermatology in July.

We hosted a symposium, [Global Perspectives in AD: Non-Atopic Challenges in Atopic Dermatitis Patients](#), as well as an in-person meeting for Councilors, Associates, and our industry partners. I hope each of you who were able to attend enjoyed these events as much as I did.

Thank you to program chairs **Nick Reynolds**, MD FRCP, and **Jeff Yu**, MD, for putting together a fantastic program. If you missed it, the presentations are [available as on-demand recordings](#).

October Symposium

Pruritus will be the focus of the IEC's sixth live symposium of 2023. In conjunction with the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology, [Pruritus in Patients with Atopic Dermatitis](#) will be presented 02:15-17:30 CEST on Saturday, 14 October, in Hall A1 of Messe Berlin (Berlin ExpoCenter City) in Berlin, Germany.

This symposium is cochaired by IEC Councilors **Sonja Ständer, MD**, and **Gil Yosipovitch, MD FAAD**. I am among the five faculty members, joined by Ständer; Yosipovitch; IEC Councilor **Mette Deleuran, MD DMSc**; and **Alexander Zink, MD MPH PhD**. (Our faculty come from four countries, with two from our host country, Germany.)

Pruritus is a dominant characteristic of atopic dermatitis. Our faculty will share the state of the science and recent treatment advances. This promises to be an interesting symposium, and I urge you to [register to join us](#) if you are attending EADV or are able to travel to Berlin that day. We are presenting in the same building and space as EADV, on the last day of the event. [Learn more about the symposium](#), and register at no additional cost.

November Symposium

Our final symposium of the year is our seventh, a record number for the IEC. [Research Techniques in Atopic Dermatitis](#) is being presented 13:00-16:00 CET on 15 November in conjunction with the 2023 Inflammatory Skin Disease Summit (ISDS) in Vienna, Austria.

Chairing the educational event are IEC Past President and Cofounder **Emma Guttman, MD PhD**, and IEC Secretary **Kenji Kabashima, MD PhD**. I look forward to welcoming many of you to the event and introducing our faculty: IEC

Councilor **Patrick Brunner, MD**; IEC Councilor **Heidi H. Kong, MD MHSc**; **Michel Gilliet, MD**; **Muzlifah Haniffa, FMedSci**; **Daniel Kaplan, MD PhD**; **Helen He, MD**; and **Andrew Ji, MD**.

These physicians and scientists will share insights into many aspects of atopic dermatitis research, from single-cell RNA sequencing to use of genetically targeted mice. [Read more about it, and register](#) to attend if you will join us in Austria.

Robert Bissonnette, MD MSc FRCPC
IEC President



IEC Publishes on Treat-to-Target Approach in *The Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology & Venereology*

The Journal of the European Academy of Dermatology & Venereology published [Treat-to-Target in Dermatology: A Scoping Review and International Eczema Council Survey on the Approach in Atopic-Dermatitis](#) on September 12.

The lead author is IEC Associate **Yael Renert-Yuval, MD MSc**. She is joined by 17 coauthors from the IEC:

- IEC President **Robert Bissonnette** and fellow Councilors **Aaron M. Drucker**, **Carsten Flohr**, **Emma Guttman-Yassky**, **Dirkjan Hijnen**, **Kenji Kabashima**, **Amy S. Paller**, **Jonathan I. Silverberg**, **Eric L. Simpson**, **Phyllis Spuls**, **Christian Vestergaard**, **Andreas Wollenberg**, **Alan D. Irvine**, and **Jacob P. Thyssen**
- IEC Associates **Ester Del Duca** and **Yael A. Leshem**
- IEC Director and patient advocate **Bernd Arents**

The open-access IEC article was shared online ahead of copyediting, typesetting, pagination, and proofreading. The final edited and typeset version of record will appear in the future.

This manuscript is the [15th IEC publication](#) in peer-reviewed journals that help our council to achieve goals regarding research, education, and patient and family care.

In the manuscript, the authors examine treat-to-target (T2T) as a structured and practical therapeutic approach to treatment of atopic dermatitis. Already used in the treatment of other chronic diseases (such as rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease), a T2T approach requires setting a target that is a goal for disease activity, then treating to achieve and maintain that target.

For this article, the authors systematically search peer-reviewed publications for T2T approaches on skin diseases and surveyed IEC members regarding components to potentially include in a T2T approach in AD (including treatable traits and relevant comorbidities). The authors conclude that “while the T2T approach may become a useful tool to simplify therapeutic goals and AD management, its foundation in AD is only starting to build.”—and their work and IEC experts’ opinions help to form that foundation for its development.

We're Looking for Good Fellows: IEC Accepts Clinical Fellowship Applications



The IEC US Clinical Fellowship Program is now accepting applications from early-career dermatologists around the world. This is a highly competitive program that offers the chance to learn from the best and brightest in the field of atopic dermatitis treatment. The program is open to physicians who have recently completed or are near completion of their residency training.

Applicants must **[submit their applications by November 30](#)** for consideration.

This program is a unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of atopic dermatitis. The IEC program pairs Clinical Fellows with expert IEC Councilors in US-based clinical settings. Fellows observe their Mentors onsite for a minimum of 4 weeks, and then continue to communicate and learn remotely for the remainder of the year.

Fellows will be mentored by IEC Councilor **Dr. Amy Paller** or IEC Councilor **Dr. Eric Simpson**. We thank Dr. Paller and Dr. Simpson for helping to educate the next generation atopic dermatitis (AD) experts.

IEC Fellows improve their abilities to treat and manage patients with AD, gain exposure to international key opinion leaders, and develop leadership skills among peers. The curriculum covers a wide range of topics related to AD, including:

- Prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of AD
- Conventional and recently approved topical and systemic treatments
- Pathogenesis of AD and differences between different AD subtypes
- Emerging epidemiologic and diagnostic data on AD
- Emerging atopic and other comorbidities of AD and its systemic nature in patients with moderate-to-severe disease

In addition to the mentoring and hands-on work, clinical Fellows receive a number of benefits, including:

- A \$5,000 fellowship stipend
- Up to \$2,000 travel reimbursement
- The opportunity to attend a major scientific dermatology congress with their Mentor
- The opportunity to present at a major conference or submit an abstract or manuscript for publication in a national or international dermatology journal

If you know a promising early-career dermatologist who is passionate about atopic dermatitis treatment and wants to advance their career in this field, urge them to apply today.

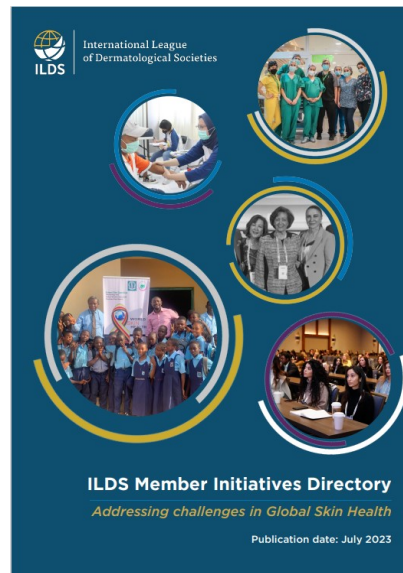
[Apply for Fellowship](#)

IEC Achievements Featured in ILDS Member Initiative Directory

A profile about the IEC and its work is featured in a recent publication from the International League of Dermatological Societies (ILDS).

The IEC is one of the league's more than **205 member organizations** from more than 100 countries. Twenty-seven ILDS members, including the IEC, are featured in the **2023 ILDS Member Initiatives Directory**. The directory's release was timed to coincide with the 25th World Congress of Dermatology July 3-8 in Singapore. The WCD host, the Dermatological Society of Singapore, is an ILDS member.

The ILDS describes itself as “a unique umbrella organisation for professional dermatology organizations of all sizes. We represent dermatology at the highest level through our ‘official relations’ status with the World Health Organization (WHO), championing dermatology and skin health to ensure its inclusion in global health policy.”



This is ILDS's second Member Initiatives Directory. It showcases member societies' initiatives, the ways they support and enhance dermatology around the world.

In introducing the directory content, then-ILDS President Lars French wrote, “The articles featured are representative of the brilliant work that dermatologists and their societies do all over the world, each and every day. I do hope that the creative and informative initiatives you read about allow you to learn, guide and strengthen your dermatological practice. It provides great reassurance that, together, we really can achieve 'Skin Health for the World.'”

[View the IEC page in the ILDS Directory](#)

IEC Hosts a Symposium and a Meeting at WCD in Singapore



The IEC presented **Global Perspectives in Atopic Dermatitis: Non-Atopic Challenges in Atopic Dermatitis Patients**, our fifth live symposia this year, on July 3 at the World Congress of Dermatology in Singapore. The well-attended program was cochaired by IEC Councilor Nick Reynolds, MD MD FRCP, and Associate Jeff Yu, MD (pictured at left). If you missed the symposium, **watch the recordings** at your convenience.

Councilors, Associates, and members of industry (some of whom paused for the photo above met in person for a meeting that day. They networked over refreshments, learned more about IEC activities and strategic plan updates, the Global Atopic Dermatitis Atlas (GADA), and a completed IEC manuscript on oral JAK inhibitors presented by Jeff Yu.

We're Growing: New Infographic Showcases the IEC's Makeup and Global Distribution

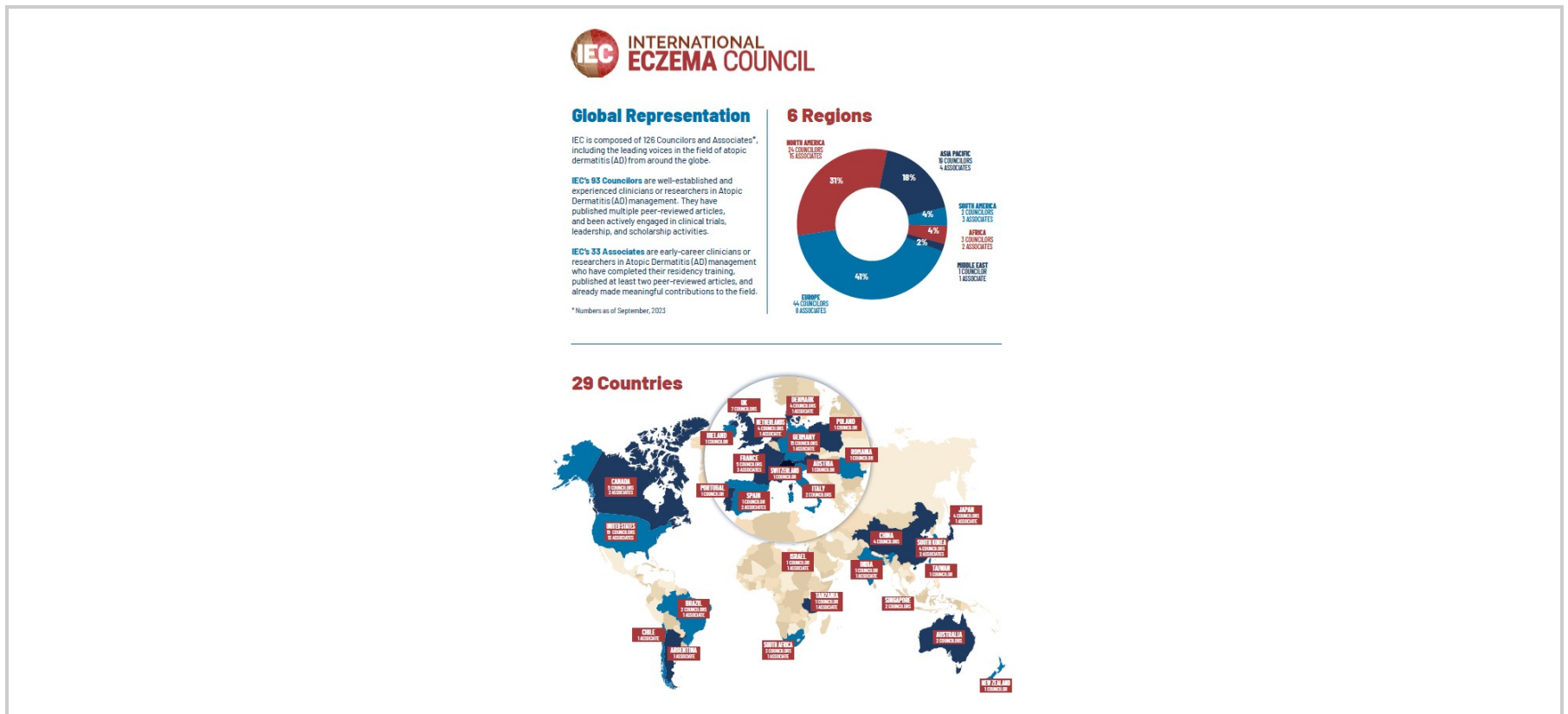
The IEC is always growing, as new physicians are accepted as Councilors or Associate Councilors.

The IEC comprises 126 Councilors and Associates, including the leading voices in the field of atopic dermatitis (AD) from around the globe.

Our Councilors' and Associates' geographic locations matter, as we seek to increase participation and representation everywhere.

View the infographic to find out what qualifications are needed to join the IEC, our breakdown of Councilors and Associates, and their locations in the world. Then, refer a colleague and encourage them to apply to [join the Council](#).

View the Infographic



Meet the Associate: Fernando Valenzuela, MD

This issue's 'Meet the Associate' features [IEC Associate Fernando Valenzuela, MD](#).



IEC Associate **Fernando Valenzuela, MD**, is associate professor of dermatology and head of the Department of Dermatology at the University of Chile in Santiago, Chile; in charge of hospitalized patients with skin conditions in Hospital Clínico University of Chile; and teaches medical students and residents about psoriasis and other papulosquamous disorders.

He founded and serves as medical director of the Centro Internacional de Estudios Clínicos (CIEC).

He recently cochaired an IEC symposium, **Pathophysiology, Diagnosis and Treatment of Atopic Comorbidities in AD Patients**, with IEC Director Valeria Aoki, MD PhD. The symposium was held live in Brazil as part of Reunión Anual de Dermatólogos Latinoamericanos (RADLA; Annual Meeting of Latin American Dermatologists).

Dr. Valenzuela's special interests are immunodermatology, psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, and autoimmune blistering diseases. He is very active in congresses and clinical trials. He has published more than 30 international papers, a students' book in dermatology, four chapters in national books, and is the lead author of the Chilean clinical guidelines for the management of psoriasis. He was the RADLA president in 2022.

What is your proudest accomplishment in the atopic dermatitis (AD) space?

When I first thought of this question, a meeting or a publication came to mind, but actually, my greatest accomplishment here is when I see the face of one of my patients, at peace after a long journey with itching, discomfort, and shame, while they start treatment for AD. Seeing them again with hope and confidence is priceless and all the efforts we do every day are committed to this.

What do you value most about being involved with the IEC?

We can share the experience, knowledge, and insights of leading researchers and clinicians in every corner, at a conference, online, speaking at a meeting, and even providing a network for research or fellowship. Education is the key, and the purpose of IEC is to disseminate information in the field of AD in an active and generous manner.

Based on your experience, what do you think will garner the most attention over the coming year in atopic dermatitis research or care?

Personalized medicine is the next frontier. Biomarkers, comorbidities, patient's preferences—we are facing exciting days in the AD arena.

What do you see as the biggest need among patients who have atopic dermatitis?

The greatest need among AD patients is to know that we have new tools, to understand that we are figuring out how to treat them better, and to share this information with their families and groups, but also with the primary care system, other specialists, and health professionals. An incredible number of patients and even our colleagues are unaware of the huge strides we are making in terms of a better understanding of AD and its treatment, so they live in the shadows.

IEC Congratulates Physician Chosen for Canadian Research Fellowship

The IEC is pleased to announce that dermatologist **Arbie Sofia Merilleno, MD**, of the Philippines has been selected for a new year-long, in-person research and mentoring opportunity. The IEC partnered with the **Montreal Dermatology Research Institute** (MDRI) to create the research fellowship in Canada for early-career physicians.

Through this new program, Merilleno will be paired with IEC Councilor **Aaron Drucker, MD ScM FRCPC**, in a clinical research/laboratory setting to monitor, observe, and learn clinical or experimental research techniques and participate in research activities. During the year-long program, which begins in January, she will spend 70-80% of her working time on research and 10-20% of the time on clinical activities.

Drucker, her mentor, is a dermatologist and clinician scientist at the University of Toronto and Women's College Hospital in Toronto, Canada. His research focuses on the epidemiology and evidence-based treatment of skin diseases. He uses advanced evidence synthesis, health administrative data, and investigator-initiated trials to answer clinical questions that are important to patients, clinicians and guidelines writers.

The fellowship program focuses on atopic dermatitis research but will enable Merilleno and Drucker to determine the research project's details. As part of the fellowship, Merilleno will attend and present at a major scientific dermatology congress during her fellowship year and submit a manuscript to a major national or international dermatology journal.

Through the program, Merilleno will receive a stipend during the fellowship and support to travel to a congress. The host institution also will receive a stipend.

Merilleno has a keen interest in atopic dermatitis. "During my residency training, I worked on a randomized controlled trial in AD entitled, 'Video-Based Education as an Adjunct Treatment for Pediatric Atopic Dermatitis: A Randomized, Assessor-Blind, Controlled Trial.' This study aimed to identify the impact of video-based education in treating atopic dermatitis (AD) in pediatric patients," she said.



Arbie Sofia Merilleno, MD



Aaron Drucker, MD ScM FRCPC

Merilleno earned her undergraduate degree in biology at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, Philippines and doctor of medicine degree at University of the East Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City, Philippines. She completed a postgraduate medical internship at Veterans Memorial Medical Center in Quezon City, Philippines, before her

residency in dermatology, where she was chief resident and lead resident for hospital administrative and department service committees, at Rizal Medical Center in Pasig City, Philippines.

She has previously been awarded scholarships to attend the 2023 World Congress of Dermatology (through the WCD Rising Star Scholarship Award) and the 2021 European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology Congress (through a scholarship from Eli Lilly).

Merilleno has also presented posters and oral presentations at dermatology conferences. She coauthored two articles published in major journals in 2022 and was lead author on one of them.

“Doing several types of research on eczema and allergy, specifically atopic dermatitis, has opened my eyes to the fact that even if we have several barriers and challenges in managing AD due to our limited resources and lack of access to biologics, as clinicians, we could still do more for our patients,” she said. She looks forward to increasing her knowledge and taking home “evidence-based recommendations (for use) in our institution and the Philippine Dermatological Society.”

Save the Dates for Remaining 2023 IEC Symposia at Major World Meetings



14 October | EADV in Germany

In Berlin, Germany, the IEC will present **Pruritus in Patients with Atopic Dermatitis** 14:15-17:30 (2:15-5:30 pm) CET on Saturday, 14 October, at the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (EADV) Congress. Presentations on pruritus and prurigo will be held in the Messe Berlin congress center Hall A1 in the morning as part of EADV before the IEC symposium.

[Register Now](#)



15 November | ISDS in Austria

In November, the Inflammatory Skin Disease Summit (ISDS) will offer a unique and dynamic program in Vienna, Austria. The theme is The Translational Revolution. The IEC's symposium, **Basic Research Techniques in AD**, will be on 15 November, from 13:00 to 16:00, prior to the ISDS meeting, at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

[Register Now](#)

SAVE THE DATE

Plan to Join us in Sunny California, USA, in Early 2024!

The IEC will present a new symposium at the
American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) 2024 Annual Meeting Global Education Day

Topicals in the Pipeline: New and Emerging Therapies

Thursday, March 7, 2024, 2-5 pm PT
San Diego Convention Center, San Diego, CA, USA

[Learn More](#)



About the IEC

The **International Eczema Council** (IEC) is a global nonprofit organization led by experts on atopic dermatitis (AD). The IEC is dedicated to increasing the understanding of AD and promoting its optimal management through research, education and patient/family care. The IEC comprises 126 Councilors and Associates from 29 countries who contribute their expertise to support the IEC's research, programs, events, and education.