



# INTERNATIONAL ECZEMA COUNCIL

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## IN THIS ISSUE

[Letter from the IEC President: A Look Back at 2021](#)

[Meet the Councilor: Interview with Valeria Aoki, MD PhD](#)

[IEC Fellowship Focuses on the Next Generation of Dermatologists](#)

[Infographic: On-Demand Education](#)

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## Letter from the IEC President: A Look Back at 2021

The IEC continued to deliver a full schedule of successful symposia and publish several manuscripts in 2021, while embarking on exciting new endeavors that strengthen our commitment to education and research. Key among these were our inaugural Dermatology Residents Virtual Meeting and new Education and Research Committees, as well as the IEC Fellowship Program, which you can read about below.

We also unveiled a **new visual identity**, complete with a refreshed and contemporary new logo, and we redoubled our efforts to keep you all informed with our revamped e-newsletter.

### Inaugural Dermatology Residents Meeting

The IEC's inaugural Dermatology Residents Virtual Meeting, "Advanced Topics in Atopic Dermatitis," was held in October with great success. We were delighted to welcome attendees from nine countries: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, India, Italy, Singapore, and the United States. Postmeeting, 100% of respondents completing the evaluation agreed that they were "very likely" or "likely" to make changes to their practices as a result of what they learned, while 83% expected their patients' outcomes to improve.

The impressive scientific and practical content was driven by my Program Co-Chair Emma Guttman, MD PhD, and our faculty, the IEC Councilors—all leading international experts in AD—who developed and delivered the 10 presentations and led the six live group discussions during this comprehensive one-day program.

In the coming months, we will announce details of our second annual Dermatology Residents Meeting. In the meantime, I recommend that program directors and supervising clinicians encourage their early-career dermatologist colleagues to take advantage of the **[on-demand sessions from our inaugural meeting](#)** and from **[our recent symposia](#)**.

### New Education and Research Committees

Because education and research are central to the mission and goals of the IEC, we have launched new committees to provide strategic and tactical guidance and oversight of these areas.

The IEC Education Committee is responsible for prioritizing and recommending educational offerings that meet the needs of healthcare professionals worldwide who care for patients with AD. Its goals include promoting clinical excellence in the management of AD, cost-effective healthcare, and professional development for

dermatologists who treat patients with AD. To accomplish this, the committee develops a plan to deliver and disseminate an annual schedule of web-based and in-person activities.

The Education Committee comprises the following 12 IEC Councilors and Associates:

**Nick Reynolds**, Chair; UK  
**Valeria Aoki**, Co-Chair; Brazil  
**April Armstrong**; USA  
**Tali Czarnowicki**; USA

**Sandipan Dhar**; India  
**Ncoza Dlova**; South Africa  
**Dirkjan Hijnen**; Netherlands  
**Carolyn Jack**; Canada

**Yael Leshem**; Israel  
**Paula Luna**; Argentina  
**John Chit Su**; Australia  
**JiaDe (Jeff) Yu**; USA

The IEC Research Committee is responsible for monitoring the science relevant to the IEC in order to prioritize, recommend, and promote IEC activities that support and advance research related to AD. These include IEC Councilor and Associate surveys and [manuscripts](#), IEC [annual Top Ten Atopic Dermatitis Articles](#), Target AD Registry, and [IEC fellowships](#) and research grants.

The Research Committee consists of the following 11 IEC Councilors and Associates:

**Jacob Thyssen, Chair**; Denmark  
**Katrina Abuabara, Co-Chair**; USA  
**Patrick Brunner, Co-Chair**; Austria  
**Sara Brown**; UK

**Ester Del Duca**; USA  
**Aaron Drucker**; Canada  
**Alan Irvine**; Ireland  
**Kenji Kabashima**; Japan

**Yael Renert-Yuval**; USA  
**Jonathan Silverberg**; USA  
**Marie Tauber**; France

### **AN EYE ON 2022 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

IEC 2022 educational symposia get underway March 24 with [Diagnosis and Management of Non-Atopic Forms of Dermatitis in Atopic Dermatitis Patients](#) at the 2022 American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) Annual Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. The program will analyze the pathophysiology of non-atopic forms of dermatitis, recognize allergic and irritant dermatitis in AD patients, and examine patch testing in AD patients and the impact of flares and systemic medications.

Then in May, I'm excited to announce that the IEC is planning its first presence at a South American meeting, at the [XXXIX RADLA CHILE 2022-Virtual Edition](#). Reunión Anual de Dermatólogos Latinoamericanos (RADLA; Annual Meeting of Latin American Dermatologist) is a professional scientific organization that brings together dermatologists and dermatology residents from 15 Latin American countries.

Check our website often for information on these and [additional symposia](#) that we will announce over the next several months.

## THANK YOU

Our remarkable accomplishments in 2021 would not have been possible without the dedication of **our Councilors and Associates from around the globe**, coupled with the outstanding leadership from our Board of Directors, hard work of our staff, and support from our corporate sponsors and donors. This year began my first term as IEC President, and I am especially grateful to Immediate Past President Dr. Emma Guttman for propelling the IEC forward.

Please all accept my heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

**Robert Bissonette, MD FRCPC MSc**

*IEC President*

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MEET THE  
COUNCILOR

Listen to an  
interview with

**Dr. Valeria  
Aoki**



**LISTEN  
NOW**

## Meet the Councilor: Valeria Aoki, MD PhD

This issue's 'Meet the Councilor' features Valeria Aoki, MD PhD, who is on the IEC Board of Directors. Dr. Aoki is an associate professor and director of the Immunodermatology Laboratory, Department of Dermatology, and vice president of the International Relations Office at the University of São Paulo School of Medicine in São Paulo, Brazil.

Read this summary of our Q&A with Dr. Aoki or **[listen to her 4-minute audio interview](#)**.

### **What is your proudest accomplishment to date in the atopic dermatitis (AD) space?**

My career has always been focused on immunodermatology. It has been one of my passions, and I have been working in this scientific field for many years. AD is an intriguing, complex disease, and exploring the many aspects of inflammation and its heterogeneous response in different populations is very challenging. Here at the University of São Paulo, we've built a solid group of AD experts that focus on translational research and education.

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

To be appointed as an IEC councilor is a great honor. The IEC gathers top medical specialists who are dedicated to deciphering the AD enigma. Therefore, it is a golden opportunity to learn from experts and to share our experiences and perspectives with colleagues from all parts of the globe. Moreover, the IEC promotes scientific projects with international cooperation, which is vital to understanding this complex disease. As a South American representative in the IEC, I would like to enhance the participation of colleagues from our region in IEC surveys, discussions, and future projects, and also to improve access to medical education regarding AD.

### **What do you think will garner the most attention over the coming year in the AD field?**

I believe that target-oriented treatments such as immunobiologics, Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitors, and other molecules that control inflammation, plus topical approaches for recovery of the altered skin microbiome in AD, are revolutionary. Such medications may modify the atopic march and reduce systemic comorbidities, therefore enhancing the quality of life and general health of many patients and families. I think the IEC is essential to enhance and participate in projects for new molecule development and also to make the scientific community aware of the outcomes of such research.

### **What do you see as the biggest need among AD patients?**

There is a need to focus on educational programs available to patients and caregivers, which can strengthen the bonds between patients and physicians. I also think that improving access to new treatment modalities is crucial, especially in low-income countries. In poor areas of the globe, many patients lack access to even basic treatments for AD.

Finally, we need to enhance the scientific and clinical skills of the next generation of healthcare professionals. The IEC offers opportunities to train with experts in the AD field in high specialized centers, through either clinical or research fellowships, which is a huge opportunity for early-career professionals.

[Listen to the Interview](#)

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## **IEC Fellowship Programs Focus on Next Generation of Dermatologists**

We're delighted to announce the recipients of the 2021 IEC Fellowship Program: Pedro J. Gómez Arias, MD, of Spain and Antonia Reimer-Taschenbrecker, MD, of Germany.

Dr. Gómez Arias began his year-long, in-person research fellowship in September, and Dr. Reimer-Taschenbrecker, started her clinical fellowship in November with 1 month of training in person followed by an 11-month remote mentorship.

The IEC plans to expand the fellowship program to international sites in the coming year. The program pairs qualified early-career physicians with experienced IEC Councilors at major US-based academic institutions for 1 year to help the new physicians develop a greater understanding of atopic dermatitis (AD), improve their ability to manage patients with AD, and acquire research skills. These efforts will foster a cohort of future leaders in AD to ultimately lower the disease burden.



## IEC RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

### *In-Person Training for 1 Year*

Dr. Gómez Arias is being mentored by Emma Guttman, MD PhD, at the Center for Excellence in Eczema, the Occupational Dermatitis Clinic, and the Laboratory for Inflammatory Skin Diseases at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York, NY, USA. Guttman is both immediate past president and cofounder of the IEC. On-site for a full year, Dr. Gómez Arias will observe and learn techniques and participate in research.

"I was amazed" to be chosen as the research fellowship recipient, Dr. Gómez Arias said. "I knew how important this fellowship was to learn more skills and to gain experience as a researcher."

Dr. Gómez Arias received his medical degree in 2016 from the Universidad de Córdoba in Córdoba, Spain, and completed his residency in dermatology earlier this year at the Hospital Universitario Reina Sofía in Córdoba. He is conducting research in immune-mediated inflammatory skin diseases for his PhD at the Universidad de Córdoba and Maimonides Institute for Biomedical Research of Córdoba (IMIBIC).

"Dr. Guttman's expertise in atopic dermatitis and other immune-mediated skin diseases is an opportunity to learn from one of the worldwide leaders in this research area," Dr. Gómez Arias said, "and the fellowship at Mount Sinai could enhance the collaboration between this center and IMIBIC."



## **IEC CLINICAL FELLOWSHIP**

### ***In-Person Training for 1 Month & Remote Mentoring for 11 Months***

Dr. Reimer-Taschenbrecker has been paired with Amy Paller, MD, at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago, IL, USA. Paller is an IEC director, past president, and cofounder.

"I was so excited to learn that I was selected!" Dr. Reimer-Taschenbrecker said.

Dr. Reimer-Taschenbrecker will be immersed in Dr. Paller's busy atopic dermatitis-focused pediatric dermatology practice at the Lurie Children's Hospital, the Pediatric Dermatology Clinical Trials Unit, and Northwestern's Skin Biology and Diseases Resource-based Center. After 4 weeks onsite to learn hands-on clinical techniques for diagnosis, treatment, and management of AD, Dr. Reimer-Taschenbrecker will take part in 11 months of remote learning and mentorship.

"Our one-month, in-person clinical fellowship, focused on atopic dermatitis, was a great start to an ongoing mentoring relationship that will last throughout the next year and beyond. We've already starting mining data for a publication," Dr. Paller said.

Dr. Reimer-Taschenbrecker received her medical degree from the University of Hamburg, Germany, in 2010 and completed her residency in pediatrics at Children's Hospital Auf Der Bult in Hanover, Germany, in 2015. She subsequently specialized in dermatology, completing her residency at the University Medical Centre, Freiburg, Germany, earlier this year. Board-certified in pediatrics, dermatology, and allergy, she works in the Department of Dermatology and the Epidermolysis Bullosa Center Freiburg at the University Medical Centre, Freiburg.

"Experiencing the busy pediatric dermatology program at Northwestern University with its large population of eczema patients of all ages and ethnic backgrounds and having the opportunity to be mentored by Dr. Paller, one of the global leaders in both eczema and pediatric dermatology, are once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for me," Dr. Reimer-Taschenbrecker said. "This will definitely help me to advance both in treating eczema and in my career."

We congratulate both Dr. Gómez Arias and Dr. Reimer-Taschenbrecker and look forward to hearing more about their experiences when their fellowships conclude next year.

Abbvie provided a grant to fund the 2021 IEC Fellowship program.

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## A Visual Look at IEC On-Demand Education

To bring **valuable education** to a wider audience, the IEC continues to develop webcasts of the prestigious symposia it delivers throughout the year. In each of these webcasts, leading experts in atopic dermatitis (AD) provide new insights and promote management through research, education, and patient/family care.

An **IEC infographic** illustrates the wide variety of available webcasts, which are free to all.

Download and share the infographic with your colleagues—and join the hundreds of learners who have already taken advantage of these webcasts to strengthen their knowledge of AD.

[DOWNLOAD THE INFOGRAPHIC](#)



### About the IEC

The **International Eczema Council** (IEC) is a global nonprofit organization led by dermatology 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. More than 100 Councilors and Associates from 24 countries contribute their expertise to support the IEC's research, programs, events, and education.