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JACOB IASHA SZNAJDER, M.D.
Northwestern University
Chicago, Illinois

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2010: The Year of the Lung

An Opportunity to Improve Lung Health and Fight Lung Disease



Lung diseases are a common cause of morbidity and mortality in all populations and all age groups worldwide. Globally, lung disease accounts for 19% of total deaths and 15% of disability-adjusted life years. Although lung diseases have always been an important cause of morbidity and mortality, their global incidence, prevalence, and importance have steadily and inexorably been increasing, presumably

as a consequence of the rapid increase of key risk factors including urbanization and industrialization, tobacco use, atmospheric air pollution, and the HIV epidemic. Despite the pervasiveness and significance of these problems, public awareness of lung diseases—and therefore the political will to address the problems of lung health—remain remarkably limited by any measure. The ATS strongly believes that the time has come to embark on a worldwide advocacy and awareness campaign to address these issues.

Therefore, the ATS is joining forces with hundreds of organizations worldwide to raise awareness of the importance of lung health and lung disease by declaring 2010 “The Year of the Lung.” The Year of the Lung initiative is being organized by the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS), which includes the ATS as well as seven key partners: the American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP), the Asian Pacific Society of Respiratory (APSR), the Asociación Latinoamericana de Tórax (ALAT), the European Respiratory Society (ERS), the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), and the Pan African Thoracic Society (PATS). Together, these international respiratory societies are reaching out to all organizations and individuals with an interest in lung health to promote The Year of the Lung.

The long-term goals of The Year of the Lung campaign are to raise awareness about lung health and lung disease among the public, initiate action in communities worldwide, and advocate for resources to advance lung health and fight lung disease, including support for research and research training programs, clinical and clinical training programs, and public health programs worldwide.

The ATS, as a major international and interdisciplinary professional and scientific society focusing on lung disease, critical illness, and sleep disorders, firmly believes that raising awareness about lung health, as well as critical illness and sleep disorders, is an essential step for achieving our mission. Our mission is to provide an international forum for scientists, clinicians, health policy experts, patients, and other partners with the expertise necessary to minimize the burden of respiratory disease, critical illness, and sleep disorders through prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

The ATS is planning a variety of specific initiatives over the coming year to do our part to accomplish the goals of The Year of the Lung. These activities will include specific programming at our

International Conference in New Orleans (May 14–19, 2010) focusing on global lung health. We are also developing and publishing an advocacy book on respiratory diseases that we will use to raise awareness and advocate for funding for research, clinical care, and public health in the United States. We are working closely to develop activities and programs in collaboration with the ATS Public Advisory Roundtable (PAR), which serves as a bridge between the ATS and organizations representing individuals affected by lung disease, critical illness, and sleep disorders, by stimulating collaboration in research, education, clinical care and advocacy. We will also be working with the ATS Chapters—our state-based organizations—to develop awareness and advocacy programs at the local and state level within the United States.

In a campaign like this, it is important for us to plan an evaluation that can assess whether we have made a difference. The initial evaluation of The Year of the Lung will assess several measures such as the number of web site hits, the number and reach of stories in the media, the number of partnering organizations and countries participating in The Year of the Lung activities, and the number of activities conducted and their impact. Public awareness will not happen overnight. We will need to examine our experience after the year, and should this evaluation be positive, we may wish to develop a longer-term effort with continued evaluation to monitor increased public awareness of lung health and policy changes by governments around the world.

We are excited about the opportunity to work with ATS members and partners worldwide to use The Year of the Lung campaign as an opportunity to improve lung health and fight lung disease. We invite you to participate in this campaign locally with Thoracic Society Chapters or other organizations and internationally and nationally with the ATS and the other sponsoring organizations. Additional specific information and a toolkit of materials are available at www.yearofthelung.org. If you would like additional information or have suggestions for how the ATS can promote The Year of the Lung, please contact any of us.

Conflict of Interest Statement: J.R.C. does not have a financial relationship with a commercial entity that has an interest in the subject of this manuscript. D.S. with his wife, co-owns \$10,000-\$50,000 in Merck stock, and \$50,000-\$100,000 in Johnson & Johnson; his wife owns \$5,000-\$10,000 in Medco stock, and \$1,000-\$5,000 in Baxter stock; he owns \$10,000-\$50,000 in Fidelity Select Health Care stock; he has received \$5,000-\$10,000 from Fidelity Biotech. J.R.W. has received \$1,000-\$5,000 in lecture fees from Ono Pharmaceuticals. S.C.C. is an employee of the American Thoracic Society.

J. RANDALL CURTIS, M.D., M.P.H.
President, ATS

DEAN SCHRAUFNAGEL, M.D.
President-elect, ATS

JO RAE WRIGHT, PH.D.
Immediate Past President, ATS

STEPHEN C. CRANE, PH.D., M.P.H.
Executive Director, ATS

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