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Review

MASK 2017: ARIA digitally-enabled, integrated, person-centred care for rhinitis and asthma multimorbidity using real-world-evidence


Abstract

mHealth, such as apps running on consumer smart devices is becoming increasingly popular and has the potential to profoundly affect healthcare and health outcomes. However, it may be disruptive and results achieved are not always reaching the goals. Allergic Rhinitis and its Impact on Asthma (ARIA) has evolved from a guideline using the best evidence-based approach to care pathways suited to real-life using mobile technology in allergic rhinitis (AR) and asthma multimorbidity. Patients largely use over-the-counter medications dispensed in pharmacies. Shared decision making centered around the patient and based on self-management should be the norm. Mobile Airways Sentinel networK (MASK), the Phase 3 ARIA initiative, is based on the freely available MASK app (the Allergy Diary, Android and iOS platforms). MASK is available in 16 languages and deployed in 23 countries. The present paper provides an overview of the methods used in MASK and the key results obtained to date. These include a novel phenotypic characterization of the patients, confirmation of the impact of allergic rhinitis on work productivity and treatment patterns in real life. Most patients appear to self-medicate, are often non-adherent and do not follow guidelines. Moreover, the Allergy Diary is able to distinguish between AR medications. The potential usefulness of MASK will be further explored by POLLAR (Impact of Air Pollution on Asthma and Rhinitis), a new Horizon 2020 project using the Allergy Diary.

Keywords: App, ARIA, Asthma, Care pathways, MASK, mHealth, Rhinitis
Background

Allergic rhinitis (AR) is the most common chronic disease worldwide. Evidence-based guidelines have improved knowledge on rhinitis and made a significant impact on AR management. However, many patients remain inadequately controlled and the costs for society are enormous, in particular due to the major impact of AR on school and work productivity [1, 2]. Unmet needs have identified clearly many gaps. These include (1) sub-optimal rhinitis and asthma control due to medical, cultural and social barriers [3, 4], (2) poor understanding of endotypes [5], better characterization of phenotypes and multimorbidities [6], better understanding of gender differences [7], (3) assessment of sentinel networks in care pathways for allergen and pollutants exposures, using symptom variation [8], (4) lack of stratification of patients for optimized care pathways [9] and (5) lack of multidisciplinary teams within integrated care pathways, endorsing innovation in real life clinical trials [8] and encouraging patient empowerment [10, 11].

Mobile health (mHealth) is the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for health services and information transfer [12]. mHealth, including apps running on consumer smart devices (i.e., smartphones and tablets), is becoming increasingly popular and has the potential to profoundly impact on healthcare [13]. Novel app-based collaborative systems can have an important role in gathering information quickly and improving coverage and accessibility of prevention and treatment [14]. Implementing mHealth innovations may also have disruptive consequences [15], so it is important to test applicability in each individual situation [16]. A rapid growth of the health apps market has been seen with an estimated 325,000 health apps available in 2017 for most fields of medicine [17]. Benefits and drawbacks have been estimated for a number of disease [18]. The application of mHealth solutions can support the provision of high quality care to patients with AR or asthma, to the satisfaction of both patients and health care professionals, with a reduction in both health care utilization and costs [19]. Appropriately identifying and representing stakeholders’ interests and viewpoints in evaluations of mHealth is a critical part of ensuring continued progress and innovation [20]. Patient, caregiver and clinician evaluations and recommendations play an important role in the development of asthma mHealth tools to support the provision of asthma management [21]. Smart devices and internet-based applications are already used in rhinitis and asthma and may help to address some unmet needs [22]. However, these new tools need to be tested and evaluated for acceptability, usability and cost-effectiveness.

Allergic Rhinitis and its Impact on Asthma (ARIA) has evolved from an evidence-based guideline using the best evidence based approach [1, 23–25] to care pathways using mobile technology in AR and asthma multimorbidity [26]. ARIA appears to be close to the patient’s needs but real-life data suggest that few patients follow guideline recommendations and that they often self medicate. Moreover, patients frequently using OTC medications dispensed in pharmacies [27]. Shared decision making (SDM) centered around the patient for self-management should be used more often.

Mobile Airways Sentinel networK (MASK), the Phase 3 ARIA initiative, has been initiated to reduce the global burden of rhinitis and asthma multimorbidity, giving the patient and the health care professional simple tools to better prevent and manage respiratory allergic diseases. More specifically, MASK is focusing on (1) understanding the disease mechanisms and the effects of air pollution in allergic diseases and asthma, (2) better appraising the burden incurred by medical needs and indirect costs, (3) the implementation of multi-sectoral care pathways integrating self-care, air pollution and patient’s literacy, using emerging technologies with real world data using the AIRWAYS ICPs algorithm [28], (4) proposing individualized and predictive medicine in rhinitis and asthma multimorbidity, (5) proposing the basis for a sentinel network at the global level for pollution and allergy and (6) assessing the societal implications of exposure to air pollution and allergens and its consequences on health inequalities globally.

The freely available MASK app (the Allergy Diary, Android and iOS) [26] is combined with an inter-operable tablet for physicians and other health care professionals (HCPs [29]), using the same extremely simple colloquial language to manage AR (Visual Analogue Scale: VAS) [30, 31]. It is being combined with data on allergen and pollution exposure (POLLAR).

MASK will be scaled up using the EU EIP on AHA strategy [32]. Phase 4 is starting in 2018 and will focus on ‘change management’. MASK is supported by several EU grants and is a WHO GARD (Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases) research demonstration project (Table 1).

Methods

Users

The Allergy Diary is used by people who searched the internet, Apple App store, Google Play or in any other way. The pages of the App are on the Euforea-ARIA website (www.euforea.eu/about-us/aria.html). A few users were clinic patients to whom the app was recommended by their physicians. Users were not requested to complete the diary for a minimum number of days. However, due to anonymization of data, no specific information on the route of access to the app could be gathered [33, 34].
The first question of the App is “I have allergic rhinitis”: Yes/No. We tested the sensitivity and specificity of this question [33]. 93.4% users with a positive answer had nasal symptoms versus 12.1% of users with a negative answer. In the first two versions of the App, allergy was not considered in the user’s questionnaire and AR cannot be differentiated from chronic rhinosinusitis. It is now included in the third version of the App (June 2018) and we will be able to answer more appropriately to this question in the next study. The results of the pilot study were confirmed in over 9000 users.

**Settings**

MASK is available in 23 countries and 16 languages. To date (01-09-2018) the app has been used by over 24,000 people.

**Ethics and privacy of data**

The Allergy Diary is CE1 registered. The terms of use were translated into all languages and customized by lawyers according to the legislation of each country, allowing the use of the results for research and commercial purposes. The example of the UK terms of use have been provided in a previous paper [33].

**Geolocation**

EU data protection rules have changed since the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (Art. 4 para. 1 no. 1 GDPR) [35]. Data anonymization is a method of sanitization for privacy. Anonymization renders personal data “in such a manner that the data subject is not or no longer identifiable” [36]. The European Commission’s Article 29 Working Party (WP29) stated already in 2014 with regards to the Directive 95/46/EC [37] that geolocation information is not only personal data but also to be considered as an identifier itself [38, 39]. Processing personal data by means of an app, like e.g. App Diary, besides Directive 95/46/EC [37] also Directive 2002/58/EC [40] as amended by Directive 2009/136/EC [41] applies.

Geolocation was studied for all people who used the Allergy Diary App from December 2015 to November 2017 and who reported medical outcomes. In contradiction to noise addition (randomization), k-anonymity [42, 43] is an acceptable method for the anonymization of MASK data (generalization) [44] and results can be used for other databases.

**Privacy assessment impact**

Privacy impact assessments (PIAs), also known as data protection impact assessments (DPIAs) in EU law, is required by GDPR (Article 35 Working Party (WP35). PIA is a systematic process to assess privacy risks to individuals in the collection, use, and disclosure of their personal data. The GDPR introduced PIAs to identify high risks to the privacy rights of individuals when processing their personal data. The assessment shall contain at least:

1. a systematic description of the envisaged processing operations and the purposes of the processing, including, where applicable, the legitimate interest pursued by the controller;
2. an assessment of the necessity and proportionality of the processing operations in relation to the purposes;
3. an assessment of the risks to the rights and freedoms of data subjects and
4. the measures envisaged to address the risks, including safeguards, security measures and mechanisms to ensure the protection of personal data and to dem-

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**Table 1 European Union and World Health Organization links of ARIA and MASK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARIA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>WHO HQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003–2013</td>
<td>CC rhinitis and asthma</td>
<td>Montpellier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012–</td>
<td>GARD demonstration project</td>
<td>WHO HQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004–2010</td>
<td>GA2LEN</td>
<td>FP6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011–2015</td>
<td>MeDALL</td>
<td>FP7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–</td>
<td>MACVIA-LR</td>
<td>DG Santé-CNECT</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014–</td>
<td>GARD demonstration project</td>
<td>WHO HQ</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014–</td>
<td>EIP on AHA B3</td>
<td>DG Santé-CNECT</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015–2016</td>
<td>SPAL</td>
<td>Structural and development funds</td>
</tr>
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<td>2015–2017</td>
<td>Sunfrail</td>
<td>DG Santé-CNECT</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017–</td>
<td>Twinning</td>
<td>EIT Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018–</td>
<td>POLLAR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
onstrate compliance with this Regulation taking into account the rights and legitimate interests of data subjects and other persons concerned.

When these risks are identified, the GDPR expects that an organization formulates measures to address these risks. Those measures may take the form of technical controls such as encryption or anonymization of data.

The PIA analysis is a self-declarative analysis. In France, the local GDPR representative (Commission Informaticque et Liberté, CNIL) has provided a software to guide the reflexion around security of personal data and the exposure risks in case of security fails. This software has been used to assess all the risks to be considered through the app uses. The conclusion was that is “negligeable”.

The field is moving very fast. In France, June, 10 2018, the modified law “LIL” (Loi Informatique et Liberté, 2018-493, https://www.cnil.fr/fr/loi-78-17-du-6-juin er-1978-modifiee) was enacted with a special focus on health-related personal data. Even if the articulation of GDPR and LIL is still unclear, we can anticipate that the app use will remain risk free.

Allergy Diary

The app collects information on AR and asthma symptoms experienced (nasal and ocular) and on disease type (intermittent/persistent) [33] (Table 3). Anonymized and geolocalized users assess daily how symptoms impact their control and AR treatment using the touchscreen functionality on their smart phone to click on five consecutive VAS (i.e. general, nasal and ocular symptoms, asthma and work) (Table 2; Fig. 1). Users input their daily medications using a scroll list that contains all country-specific OTC and prescribed medications available (Fig. 2). The list populated using IMS data and revised by country experts is continuously revised by country experts.

There is a high degree of correlation between these VAS measurements. The example of VAS global measured and VAS nose is presented in Fig. 2.

Outcomes

Five VAS measurements [VAS-global measured, VAS-nose, VAS-eye, VAS-asthma and VAS-work (Table 4)] and a calculated VAS-global score (VAS-nasal + VAS-ocular divided by 2) were assessed [34]. VAS levels range from zero (not at all bothersome) to 100 (very bothersome). Independency of VAS questions was previously confirmed using the Bland and Altman regression analysis [34, 45].

| Q1: I have rhinitis: Yes/No |
| Q2: I have asthma: Yes/No |
| Q3: My symptoms (tick) |
| - Runny nose |
| - Itchy nose |
| - Sneezing |
| - Congestion (blocked nose) |
| - Itchy eyes |
| - Red eyes |
| - Watery eyes |
| Q4: How they affect me: My symptoms (tick) |
| - Affect my sleep |
| - Affect my daily activities |
| - Restrict my participation in school or work |
| - Are troublesome |

Transfer of personal data from the App to a print

Patients cannot give access to their electronic data to a HCP due to privacy policies. However, they can easily print the daily control of their disease and the medications that they filled in the Allergy Diary as follows (Fig. 3).

Additional questionnaires

MASK also includes EQ-5D (EuroQuol) [46–48], Work Productivity and Activity Impairment Allergic Specific (WPAI-AS) [49] and Control of AR and Asthma Test (CARAT) [50–53]. The Epworth Sleepiness Questionnaire [54, 55] is included (June 2018).

Medications

A scroll list is available for all OTC and prescribed medications of the 23 countries. The International Nonproprietary Names classification was used for drug nomenclature [56]. 85 INNs and 505 medications were identified (Fig. 1).

Adherence to treatment

Globally, non-adherence to medications is a major obstacle to the effective delivery of health care. Many mobile phone apps are available to support people to take their medications and to improve medication adherence [57, 58]. However, a recent meta-analysis found that the majority did not have many of the desirable features and were of low quality [57]. However, it is unknown how people use apps, what is considered adherent or non-adherent in terms of app usage, or whether adherence with an app in anyway reflects adherence with medication or control.

In MASK, we did not use adherence questionnaires but first attempted to assess short-term adherence and then to address the long-term issues. [59].

Digitalized ARIA symptom-medication score

Symptom-medication scores are needed to assess the control of allergic diseases. They are currently being
developed for MASK and are being compared with existing ones [60].

**MASK algorithm and clinical decision support system**

Clinical decision support systems (CDSS) are software algorithms that advise health care providers on the diagnosis and management of patients based on the interaction of patient data and medical information, such as prescribed drugs. CDSS should be based on the best evidence and algorithms to aid patients and health care professionals to jointly determine the treatment and its step-up or step-down strategy for an optimal disease control.

The selection of pharmacotherapy for AR patients depends on several factors, including age, prominent symptoms, symptom severity, AR control, patient preferences and cost. Allergen exposure, pollution and resulting symptoms vary, needing treatment
adjustment. In AR, The MASK CDSS is incorporated into an interoperable tablet [29] for HCPs (ARIA Allergy Diary Companion) [10, 26]. This is based on an algorithm to aid clinicians to select pharmacotherapy for AR patients and to stratify their disease severity [26] (Fig. 4). It uses a simple step-up/step-down individualized approach to AR pharmacotherapy and may hold the potential for optimal control of symptoms, while minimizing side-effects and costs. However, its use varies depending on the availability of medications in the different countries and on resources. The algorithm is now digitalized and available in English (Fig. 5).

**MASK follows the CHRODIS criteria of “Good Practice”**

The European Commission is co-funding a large collaborative project named JA-CHRODIS in the context of the 2nd EU Health Programme 2008–2013 [61]. JA-CHRODIS has developed a check-list of 27 items for the evaluation of Good Practices (GP) (http://chrodis.eu/our-work/04-knowledge-platform/). According to the JA-CHRODIS, a Good Practice has been proven to work well and produce good results, and is therefore recommended as a model to be scaled up. The JA-CHRODIS criteria are grouped into nine categories:

- Equity.
- Practice.
- Ethical considerations.
- Evaluation.
- Empowerment and participation.
- Target population.
- Sustainability.
- Governance.
- Scalability

As part of SUNFRAIL, MASK tested the 27 item criteria of CHRODIS and was found to be an example of Good Practice [62].

**Pilot study of mobile phone technology in AR**

A pilot study in 3260 users found that Allergy Diary users were able to properly provide baseline simple phenotypic characteristics. Troublesome symptoms were found mainly in the users with the largest number of symptoms. Around 50% of users with troublesome rhinitis and/or ocular symptoms suffered work impairment. Sleep was impaired by troublesome symptoms and nasal obstruction (Fig. 6). results suggest novel concepts and research questions in AR that may not be identified using classical methods [33].

![Fig. 2 Correlation between Visual Analog Scale (VAS) global measured and nasal symptoms (VAS nose) (unpublished)](image-url)
Validation of the MASK Visual Analogue Scale on cell phones

VAS included in the Allergy Diary was found to be a validated tool to assess control in AR patients following COSMIN guidelines [63] in 1225 users and 14,612 days: internal consistency (Cronbach’s α-coefficient > 0.84 and test–retest > 0.7), reliability (intra-class correlation coefficients), sensitivity and acceptability [64]. In addition, e-VAS had a good reproducibility when users (n = 521) answered the e-VAS twice in less than 3 h.

Transfer of innovation of AR and asthma multimorbidity in the elderly: Reference Site Twinning (EIP on AHA)

The EIP on AHA includes 74 Reference Sites. The aim of this TWINNING was to transfer innovation from the MASK App to other reference sites. The phenotypic characteristics of rhinitis and asthma multimorbidity in adults and the elderly are compared using validated mHealth tools (i.e. the Allergy Diary and CARAT) in 23 Reference Sites or regions across Europe and Argentina, Australia, Brazil and Mexico [46]. This will improve understanding, assessment of burden, diagnosis and management of rhinitis in the elderly by comparison with an adult population. The pilot study has been completed in Germany and the project is fully operative using two protocols (Table 3).

Results

Work productivity

AR impairs social life, work and school productivity. Indirect costs associated with lost work productivity are the principal contributor to the total AR costs and result mainly from impaired work performance by presenteeism [2]. The severity of AR symptoms was the most consistent disease-related factor associated with impact of AR on work productivity, although ocular symptoms and sleep disturbances may independently affect work productivity.

Fig. 3 Transfer of patient information on a computer and printed information (from Bousquet et al. [46])
productivity. Overall, the pharmacologic treatment of AR showed a beneficial effect on work productivity.

A cross-sectional study using Allergy diary in 1136 users (5659 days) assessed the impact on work productivity of uncontrolled AR assessed by VAS [34]. In users with uncontrolled rhinitis (VAS global measured ≥ 50), approximately 90% had some work impairment and over 50% had severe work impairment.
There was a significant correlation between VAS-global calculated and VAS-work \((Rho = 0.83, p < 0.00001,\) Spearman rank test). The study has been extended to almost 17,000 days and similar results were observed (Fig. 7).

The baseline study found that bothersome symptoms, nasal obstruction and ocular symptoms were involved in work productivity impact [33] (Fig. 8).

*The Allergy Diary* includes the WPAI:AS in six EU countries. All consecutive users who completed the VAS-work from June 1 to July 31, 2016 were included in the study [66]. A highly significant correlation was found between Questions 4 (impairment of work) and 9 (impairment of activities) in 698 users \((Rho = 0.85)\).

All these studies combine to confirm the impact of uncontrolled AR on work productivity.

**Novel phenotypes of allergic diseases**

Multimorbidity in allergic airway diseases is well known [6], but no data exist regarding the daily dynamics of symptoms. The *Allergy Diary* assessed the presence and control of daily allergic multimorbidity (asthma, conjunctivitis, rhinitis) and its impact on work productivity in 4025 users and 32,585 days monitored in 19 countries from May 25, 2015 to May 26, 2016. VAS levels \(< 20/100\) were categorized as “Low” burden and VAS levels \(\geq 50/100\) as “High” burden. VAS global measured levels assessing the global control of the allergic disease were significantly associated with daily allergic multimorbidity. Eight hypothesis-driven patterns were defined based on “Low” and “High” VAS levels. There were \(< 0.2\%\) days of Rhinitis Low and Asthma High or Conjunctivitis High patterns. There were 5.9\% days with a Rhinitis High—Asthma Low pattern. There were 1.7\% days with a Rhinitis High—Asthma High—Conjunctivitis Low pattern. A novel Rhinitis High—Asthma High—Conjunctivitis High pattern was identified in 2.9\% days and had the greatest impact on uncontrolled VAS global measured and impaired work productivity (Fig. 9). The mobile technology enabled investigation in a novel approach of the intra-individual variability of allergic multimorbidity using days. It identified an unrecognized extreme pattern of uncontrolled multimorbidity [59].

**Treatment of allergic rhinitis using mobile technology with real world data**

Large observational implementation studies are needed to triangulate the findings from randomized control trials (RCTs) as they reflect “real world” everyday practice. We attempted to provide additional and complementary insights into the real-life AR treatment using mobile technology. The *Allergy Diary* was filled in by 2871 users

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**Table 3 Twinning protocols (from Bousquet et al., [65])**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protocol 1</th>
<th>Protocol 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allergy Diary</strong></td>
<td>Short version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equation SD</strong></td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physician’s questionnaire</strong></td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethics committee</strong></td>
<td>Not needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inform consent</strong></td>
<td>Terms of Reference on App</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment</strong></td>
<td>Any user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons attending clinic visits can be included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physician’s questionnaire</strong></td>
<td>+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 6 Impact of allergic rhinitis depending on the number of symptoms (from Bousquet et al. [33])**
Fig. 7  Correlation between VAS work and VAS global measured, nose, eye and asthma (Bousquet unpublished)

- N = 16,925 days
- r = 0.82
- 20 countries
- 15 languages
- Rhinitis: r=0.77
- Conjunctivitis: r=0.69
- Asthma: r=0.60

Fig. 8  Impact of symptoms on work, school and daily activities (from Bousquet et al. [33])

1,774 users with rhinorrhea
who reported 17,091 days of VAS in 2015 and 2016. Medications were reported for 9634 days. The assessment of days appeared to be more informative than the course of the treatment as, in real life, patients rarely use treatment on a daily basis; rather, they appear to increase treatment use with the loss of symptom control and to stop it when symptoms disappear. The Allergy Diary allowed the differentiation between treatments within or between classes (intranasal corticosteroid use containing medications and oral H1-antihistamines). The control of days differed between no (best control), single or multiple treatments (worst control) (Fig. 10). The study confirms the usefulness of the Allergy Diary in accessing and assessing everyday use and practice in AR [59].

Adherence to medications was studied in almost 7000 users reporting medications. 1770 users reported over
7 days of VAS between January 1, 2016 and August 31, 2016 and a major lack of adherence to treatment was observed for all medications (Menditto et al., in preparation).

**MASK in the pharmacy**

Multidisciplinary integrated care is necessary to reduce the burden of chronic diseases. A significant proportion of patients with AR self-manage their condition and often the pharmacist is the first HCP that a person with nasal symptoms contacts [66, 67]. Pharmacists are trusted in the community and are easily accessible. As such, pharmacists are an important part of the multidisciplinary healthcare team, acting at different steps of rhinitis care pathways.

Pharmacists are important in many areas of intervention in AR:

- Recognizing (identification).
- Risk assessment/stratification.
- OTC treatment.
- Manage refills.
- Patient education.
- Referral to a physician.
- Administration of topical treatment technique and adherence to treatment.

Simple algorithms and tools are essential in the routine implementation of these steps. A first approach was made by ARIA in the pharmacy [68] and is currently being updated using MASK.

**POLLAR (Impact of air POLLution on Asthma and Rhinitis)**

AR and asthma are impacted by allergens and air pollution. However, interactions between air pollution, sleep [55, 69] and allergic diseases are insufficiently understood. POLLAR aims at combining emerging technologies [search engine TLR2 (technology readiness level); pollution sampler TLR6, App TLR9] with machine learning to (1) understand effects of air pollution in AR and its impact on sleep, work, asthma, (2) propose novel care pathways integrating pollution and patient’s literacy, (3) study sleep, (4) improve work productivity, (5) propose the basis for a sentinel network at the EU level for pollution and allergy and (6) assess the societal implications of the interaction.

POLLAR will use the freely existing application for AR monitoring (Allergy Diary, 14,000 users, TLR8) combined with a new tool allowing queries on allergen and pollen (TLR2) and existing pollution data. Machine learning will be used to assess the relationship between air pollution and AR comparing polluted and non-polluted areas in 6 EU countries. Data generated in 2018 will be confirmed in 2019 and extended by the individual assessment of pollution (Canarin®, portable sensor, TLR6) in AR and sleep apnea patients used as a control group having impaired sleep. The geographic information system GIS will map the results.

Google Trends (GT) searches trends of specific queries in Google and reflects the real-life epidemiology of AR. We compared GT terms related to allergy and rhinitis in all European Union countries, Norway and Switzerland from January 1, 2011 to December, 20 2016. An annual and clear seasonality of queries was found in most countries but the terms ‘hay fever’, ‘allergy’ and ‘pollen’—show cultural differences [70]. Using longitudinal data in different countries and multiple terms, we identified an awareness-related spike of searches (December 2016) [70]. In asthma, GTs can identify spikes of mortality as was found in Australia and Kuwait in 2016. However, the usual peaks of asthma during allergen exposure or virus infections cannot be easily monitored [71].

**Global applicability of MASK and POLLAR, and their benefits**

Although MASK has been devised to optimize care pathways in rhinitis and asthma multimorbidity, its applicability is far more extensive (Table 4).

For MASK, several steps have been achieved.

**Conclusion**

MASK is a novel approach to obtain real-life data concerning rhinitis and asthma multimorbidity and to help patients and physicians for a better SDM. It can be used for multiple purposes in a friendly manner in order to improve the control of allergic diseases in a cost-effective approach.
Table 4 Global applicability of MASK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicability</th>
<th>MASK</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical practice</td>
<td>Physicians will be able to read the files of the patients in order to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optimize treatment for the patient and, in particular, the current or the next pollen season</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assess and increase the adherence to treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Help for shared decision making</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prescribe allergen immunotherapy (AIT) more rapidly when the patient is not controlled despite optimal pharmacologic treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Determine the efficacy of AIT in patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Allergy Diary is an essential tool to provide personalized medicine in AR and asthma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change management</td>
<td>The first results of MASK indicate that many patients are uncontrolled and non-adherent to treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moreover, they appear to use their medications as needed and not as a regular basis as prescribed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change management is needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patient empowerment</td>
<td>Better understanding of the symptoms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sentinel network linking aerobiology data and control</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Improved adherence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-management</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patient empowerment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Messages sent by the App</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical trials</td>
<td>For RCTs, it is essential to have clarity on definitions, and relevant tools. The Allergy Diary allows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To better stratify the patients needing AIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To assess the efficacy of AIT during the trial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To assess the efficacy when AIT is stopped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observational studies are of key importance to confirm RCTs and bring new hypotheses for the treatment of AR and asthma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration and reimbursement of medicines</td>
<td>Controlled trials designed with a uniform approach will be more easily evaluated by the Health Technology Assessment agencies (such as NICE) for reimbursement. The Allergy Diary uses EQ-SD, a validated measure of utility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better understanding of direct and indirect costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Controlled trials designed with a uniform approach will help to synchronize data from real-life world regarding clinical effects and safety/tolerability of new drugs (post-marketing pharmacovigilance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research on mechanisms and genetics</td>
<td>A uniform definition and a collaborative approach to epidemiological, genetic and mechanistic research are important and will be enhanced by the stratification of patients using the Allergy Diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different levels of phenotype characterization (granularity) can be applied to assess phenotypic characterization in old age subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epidemiology</td>
<td>In epidemiologic population studies, standardized definitions and tools are fundamental. The Allergy Diary allows novel approaches combining classical cross-sectional and longitudinal studies with real life studies in large populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>AR and asthma represent a major burden for the employers, and the estimated annual costs in the EU range from 30 to 60 BE. Better control of the disease was shown to reduce costs. The Allergy Diary has the potential to improve the control of allergic diseases and to significantly improve work productivity at the EU level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public health planning</td>
<td>For public health purposes, a perfect patient characterization in real life is needed to identify the prevalence, burden and costs incurred by patients in order to improve quality of care and optimize health care planning and policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction of inequities</td>
<td>Inequities still exist in the EU for allergic diseases prevalence and burden (not only sex/gender inequities). POLLAR will attempt to understand them and to propose policies and health promotion strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations

AHA: active and healthy ageing; AIRWAYS ICPs: integrated care pathways for airway diseases; AR: allergic rhinitis; ARIA: Allergic Rhinitis and Its Impact on Asthma; CARAT: Control of Allergic Rhinitis and Asthma Test; CDSS: clinical decision support system; CNIL: Commission Informatique et Liberté; CRD: Chronic Respiratory Disease; DG CONNECT: Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content & Technology; DG Santé: Directorate General for Health and Food Safety; DG: Directorate General; EFA: European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients’ Associations; EIP on AHA: European Innovation Partnership on AHA; EIP: European Innovation Partnership; EQ-SD: Euroqol; GARD: WHO Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases; GDPR: General Data Protection Regulation; GIS: geographic information system; GP: Good Practice; GT: Google Trends; HCP: health care professional; ICP: integrated care pathway; IMS: Institute of Medical Science; JA-CHRODIS: Joint Action on Chronic Diseases and Promoting Healthy Ageing across the Life Cycle; MACVIA-ILR: contre les MALadies Chroniques pour un Vieillissement Actif
(Fighting chronic diseases for AHA); MASK: Mobile Airways Sentinel network; MeDALL: Mechanisms of the Development of Allergy (FP7); mHealth: mobile health; NCD: non-communicable disease; OTC: over the counter; PIA: privacy Impact Assessment; POLLAR: Impact of air POLlution on Asthma and Rhinitis; QOL: quality of life; SCUAD: severe chronic upper airway disease; TRL: technology readiness level; TVWINNING: transfer of innovation of mobile technology; VAS: Visual Analogue Scale; WHO: World Health Organization; WP4A-S: Work Productivity and Activity Questionnaire.

Authors’ contributions
All authors are MAKs members and have contributed to the design of the project. Many authors also included users and disseminated the project in their own country. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Author details
1] MACVIA-France, Fondation Partenariale FMC V/A- LR, CHRU Arnaud de Villeneuve, 371 Avenue du Doyen Gaston Giraud, Montpellier, France. 2] INSERM U 1168, VIMA: Ageing and Chronic Diseases Epidemiological and Public Health Approaches, Villejuif, Université Versailles St-Quentin-en-Yvelines, UMR-S 1168, Montigny le Bretonneux, France. 3] Eufroea, Brussels, Belgium. 4] KinyMed-INOV, Montpellier, France. 5] IQUI Consultants Ltd, London, UK. 6] MedScript Ltd, Dundalk, Co Louth, Ireland. 7] Laboratoire HP2, Grenoble, INSERM, U1042, Université Grenoble Alpes, Grenoble, France. 8] CHU de Grenoble, Grenoble, France. 9] Conseil Général de l’Economie, de l’Industrie et du Numérique, Paris, France. 10] UCBIO, REQUITE, Faculty of Pharmacy and Center of Competence on Active and Healthy Ageing, University of Porto (Porto4Ageing), Porto, Portugal. 11] Center for Health Technology and Services Research–CINTESIS, Faculdade de Medicina, Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal. 12] Medica, Ltda, Porto, Portugal. 13] Faculty of Health Sciences and CICS – UBI, Health Sciences Research Centre, University of Beira Interior, Covilhã, Portugal. 14] Allergy Center, CUF Descobertas Hospital, Lisbon, Portugal. 15] Immunologie, Centro Hospitalar Universitário de Coimbra and Faculty of Medicine, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal. 16] ProAR – Nucleo de Excelencia em Asma, Federal University of Bahia, Vitoria da Conquista, Brazil. 17] WHO GARD Planning Group, Salvador, Brazil. 18] Allergy Service, University Hospital of Federal University of Santa Catarina (HU-UFSC), Florianópolis, Brazil. 19] Asthma Reference Center, Escola Superior de Ciencias da Santa Casa da Misericordia de Vitoria, Vitoria, Esporito Santo, Brazil. 20] Division for Health Innovation, Campania Region and Federico II University Hospital Naples (R&D and DISMET), Naples, Italy. 21] CIRFF, Federico II University, Naples, Italy. 22] SOS Allergy and Clinical Immunology, USL Toscana Centro, Prato, Italy. 23] Department of Medical Sciences, Allergy and Clinical Immunology Unit, University of Torino & Mauriziano Hospital, Torino, Italy. 24] Consortium of Pharmacies and Services COSAFER, Salerno, Italy. 25] Unit of Geriatric Immunology, Allergy, University of Bari Medical School, Bari, Italy. 26] Department of Medicine, Surgery and Dentistry “Scuola Medica Salernitana”, University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy. 27] Centre of Excellence in Asthma and Allergy, Hospital Médica Sur, Mexico City, Mexico. 28] Mexico City, Mexico. 29] Puebla, Puebla, Mexico. 30] Ciudad Mexico, Mexico. 31] Allergy Department, Centre de l’Atsthme et des Allergies Hôpital d’Enfants Armand-Trousseau (AP-HP), Paris, France. 32] UPMC Univ Paris 06, UMR_S 1136, Institut Pierre Louis d’Epidémiologie et de Santé Publique, Sorbonne Universités, Equipe EPAR, 75013 Paris, France. 33] Epidemiology of Allergic and Respiratory Diseases, Department Institute Pierre Louis of Epidemiology and Public Health, INSERM, UPMC Sorbonne Universités, Medical School Saint Antoine, Paris, France. 34] La Rochelle, France. 35] Department of Respiratory Diseases, Montpellier University Hospital, Montpellier, France. 36] UPRES EA220, Pôle des Maladies des Voies Respiratoires, Hôpital Foch, Université Paris-Saclay, Suresnes, France. 37] Reims, France. 38] Division of Internal Medicine, Asthma and Allergy, Baricki University Hospital Medical University of Lodz, Lodz, Poland. 39] Department of Prevention of Environmental Hazards and Allergology, Medical University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland. 40] Clinic of Children’s Diseases, and Institute of Health Sciences Department of Public Health, Vilnius University Institute of Clinical Medicine, Vilnius, Lithuania. 41] European Academy of Paediatrics (EAP/UEMS-SP), Brussels, Belgium. 42] Clinic of Children’s Diseases, Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania. 43] Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania. 44] Woodbrook Medical Centre, Loughborough, UK. 45] Allergy and Respiratory Research Group, Usher Institute of Population Health Sciences and Informatics, University of Edinburgh, Medical School, Edinburgh, UK. 46] Centre of Medical Informatics, Usher Institute of Population Health Sciences and Informatics, The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK. 47] Allergy Unit, Department of Dermatology, University Hospital of Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland. 48] Center for Rhinology and Allergology, Wiesbaden, Germany. 49] Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, Universitätsmedizin Mannheim, Medical Faculty Mannheim, Heidelberg University, Mannheim, Germany. 50] Comprehensive Allergy-Centre-Charité, Department of Dermatology and Allergy, Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany. 51] Global Allergy and Asthma European Network (GA2LEN), Berlin, Germany. 52] Institute of Medical Statistics, and Computational Biology, Medical Faculty, University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany. 53] CR-Clinical Research International-Ltd, Hamburg, Germany. 54] Department of Internal Medicine, Medical University of Graz, Graz, Austria. 55] Department of ENT, Medical University of Graz, Graz, Austria. 56] Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Academic Medical Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. 57] Department of Public Health and Primary Care, Leiden University Medical Centre, Leiden, The Netherlands. 58] iGloballab, Center for Research in Environmental Epidemiology (CREAL), Barcelona, Spain. 59] IMIM (Hospital del Mar Research Institute), Barcelona, Spain. 60] CIBER Epidemiología y Salud Pública (CIBERESP), Barcelona, Spain. 61] Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), Barcelona, Spain. 62] Allergy Section, Department of Internal Medicine, Hospital Vall d’Hebron and ARADyAL Research Network, Barcelona, Spain. 63] AQUAS, Barcelona, Spain. 64] EUREGHA, European Regional and Local Health Association, Brussels, Belgium. 65] Rhinology Unit and Smell Clinic, ENT Department, Hospital Clinic, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain. 66] Clinical and Experimental Respiratory Immunology, IDIABIPS, CIBERS, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain. 67] Skin and Allergy Hospital, Helsinki University Hospital, Helsinki, Finland. 68] Association of Finnish Psychiatrists, Helsinki, Finland. 69] Department of Lung Diseases and Clinical Immunology, University of Turku, Turku, Finland. 70] Terveytsalo Allergy Clinic, Turku, Finland. 71] Department of Pulmonary Diseases, Cerrahpaspa Faculty of Medicine, Istanbul University, Istanbul, Turkey. 72] Department of Pulmonary Diseases, Faculty of Medicine, Celal Bayar University, Manisa, Turkey. 73] GARD Executive Committee, Manisa, Turkey. 74] Center for Pediatrics and Child Health, Institute of Human Development, Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital, University of Manchester, Manchester, UK. 75] Allergy Department, 2nd Pediatric Clinic, Athens General Children’s Hospital “P&A Kyriakou”, University of Athens, 11527 Athens, Greece. 76] Department of Otorhinolaryngology, University of Crete School of Medicine, Heraklion, Greece. 77] Woolcock Institute of Medical Research, University of Sydney and Sydney Local Health District, Glebe, NSW, Australia. 78] Department of Allergy, Immunology and Respiratory Medicine, Alfred Hospital and Central Clinical School, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia. 79] Department of Immunology, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia. 80] Servicio de Alergia e Immunologia, Clinica Santa Isabel, Buenos Aires, Argentina. 81] Director of Center of Allergy, Immunology and Respiratory Diseases, Santa Fe, Argentina Center for Allergy and Immunology, Santa Fe, Argentina. 82] Universidad Católica de Córdoba, Córdoba, Argentina. 83] Department of Clinical Science and Education, Karolinska Institutet, Södersjukhuset, Stockholm, Sweden. 84] Sachi Children and Youth Hospital, Södertjukhuset, Stockholm, Sweden. 85] Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden. 86] Centre for Clinical Research Sörmland, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden. 87] Upper Airways Research Laboratory, ENT Department, Ghent University Hospital, Ghent, Belgium. 88] Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Univ Hospitals Leuven, Louvain, Belgium. 89] Academic Medical Center, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. 90] EFA European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients’ Associations, Brussels, Belgium. 91] Department of Dermatology and Allergy Centre, Odense University Hospital, Odense Research Center for Anaphylaxis (ORCA), Odense, Denmark. 92] Department of Medicine, Clinical Immunology and Allergy, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada. 93] University Hospital Olomouc, Olomouc, Czech Republic. 94] Peercode BV, Geldermalsen, The Netherlands. 95] Faculty of Medicine, Transylvania University, Brasov, Romania. 96] Division of Allergy/Immunology, University of South Florida, Tampa, USA. 97] Section of Allergy and Immunology, Saint Louis University School of Medicine, Saint Louis, MO, USA. 98] Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD, USA. 99] Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Chiba University Hospital, Chiba, Japan. 100] Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA.

Acknowledgements
None.
Lund, Sweden. 44Department of Geriatrics, Montpellier University Hospital, Montpellier, France. 45Department of Pathophysiology and Transplantation, University of Milan, IRCCS Fondazione Ca Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Milan, Italy. 46Department of Respiratory Medicine, Buenos Aires, Argentina. 47Division of Internal Medicine, Asthma and Allergy, Barlicki University Hospital, Medical University of Lodz, Poland. 48Pediatric Department, University of Verona Hospital, Verona, Italy. 49Department of Public Health and Infectious Diseases, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy. 50Second University of Naples and Institute of Translational Medicine, Italian National Research Council. 51Neocalcohol and Inflammation Research Unit, Babolcock Empysema Centre and and Sydney Local Health District, Gebe, NSW, Australia. 52Allergist, La Rochelle, France. 53Associate professor of clinical medicine, Laval’s University, Quebec city, Head of medicine department, Hôpital de la Malbaie, Quebec, Canada. 54Quebec Heart and Lung Institute, Laval University, Quebec City, Quebec, Canada. 55Centre Hospitalier Saint-Lazare, Valenciennes, France. 56Head of Department of Clinical Pharmacy of Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas, Lithuania. 57Institute of Lung Health, Respiratory Biomedical Unit, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, Leicester, UK. 58Department of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation, University of Leicester, Leicester, UK. 59Department of Health Research Methods, Evidence and Impact, Division of Immunology and Allergy, Department of Medicine, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada. 60Chief of the Department of Health and Social Solidarity, Autonomous Province of Trento, Italy. 61University of Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, Mainz, Germany. 62Pharmacists, Municipality Pharmacy, Sarno, Italy. 63University of Medicine and Pharmacy Victor Babes, Timisoara, Romania. 64Instituto de Pediatría, Hospital Zambraño Hellen Tec de Monterrey, Monterrey, Mexico. 65Imperial College and Royal Brompton Hospital, London, UK. 66Centro Medico Docente La Trinidad, Cañarás, Venezuela. 67Regional Director Assafarim Cambia and President of the Board of Directors of Cofaser, Salerno, Italy. 68Service de pneumologie, CHU et université d’Avrignge, Clermont-Ferrand, France. 69Department of Respiratory Diseases, Montpellier University Hospital, France. 70Imperial College London - National Heart and Lung Institute, Royal Brompton Hospital NHS, London, UK. 71“Federal University of Minas Gerais, Medical School, Department of Pediatrics, Belo Horizonte, Brazil. 72Assistant Director General, Montpellier, Région Occitanie, France. 73Mayor of Sarno and President of Salerno Province, Director, Anesthesiology Service, Sarno “Martiri del Villa Malta” Hospital, Italy. 74Allergy Section, Department of Internal Medicine, Hospital Vall d’Hebron & ARADyAL Spanish Research Network, Barcelona, Spain. 75Department of Paediatrics, Oslo University Hospital and University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway. 76CEDOC, Integrated Pathophysiological Mechanisms Research Group, Nova Medical School, Campo dos Mortes da Patria, Lisbon, and Service of Imunologia, Centro Hospitalar de Lisboa Central, EPE, Lisboa, Portugal. 77Regional Ministry Campo dos Martires da Patria, Lisbon, and Serviço de Imunoalergologia, Pathophysiological Mechanisms Research Group, Nova Medical School, Lisbon, Portugal. 78SOS Allergology and Clinical Immunology, USL Toscana Centro, Prato, Italy. 79Allergy and Immunology Laboratory, Metropolitan University Hospital, Branquilla, Columbia. 80Department of Public Health and Primary Care, Leiden University Medical Center, Leiden, The Netherlands. 81Capital Institute of Pediatrics, Chaoyang district, Beijing, China. 82Division of Internal Medicine, Asthma and Allergy, Barlicki University Hospital, Medical University of Lodz, Poland. 83Plateforme Transversale d’Allergologie, Institut du Thorax, CHU de Nantes, Nantes, France. 84LANUA International Healthcare Consultancy, Northern Ireland, UK. 85Innovación y nuevas tecnologías, Salud Sector sanitario de Barbastelo, Barbastelo, Spain. 86Innovation and Research Office, Department of Health and Social Solidarity, Autonomous Province of Trento, Italy. 87Life and Health Sciences Research Institute (ICVS), School of Medicine, University of Minho, Braga, Portugal, ICVS/38’S, PT Government Associate Laboratory, Braga/Guimarães, Portugal. 88Guadalara, Mexico. 89FIMMG (Federazione Italiana Medici di Medicina Generale), Milan, Italy. 90UCIBIO, REQUINTE, Faculty of Pharmacy and Competence Center on Active and Healthy Ageing of University of Porto/PortoAequing, Porto, Portugal. 91Mexico City, Mexico. 92IMT Mines Alès, Université Montpellier, Alès, France. 93Department of Medicine, Nova Southeastern University, Davie, University of Miami Dept of Medicine, Miami, Florida, USA. 94Regional Director Assafarim Cambia and Vice President of the Board of Directors of Cofaser, Salerno, Italy. 95ProAR – Núcleo de Excelencia em Asma, Federal University of Bahia, Brasil and WHO GARD Planning Group, Brazil. 96Centre for Respiratory Medicine and Allergy, Institute of Inflammation and Repair, University of Manchester and University Hospital of South Manchester, Manchester, UK. 97The Centre for Allergy Research, The Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden. 98Azienda Provinciale per i Servizi Sanitari di Trento (APSS-Trento), Italy. 99Division of Internal Medicine, Federal University of Santa Catarina, Trindade, Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil. 100Sleep Unit, Department of Neurology, Hôpital Gu-de-Chauliac Montpellier, Inserm U1061, France. 101Department of Dermatology and Allergy, Technische Universität München, Munich, Germany, ZAUM-Center for Allergy and Environment, Helmholtz Center Munich, Technische Universität München, Munich, Germany. 102Allergy Division, Chest Disease Department, University Hospital of Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France. 103EFA European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients’Associations, Brussels, Belgium. 104AQUAS, Barcelona, Spain & EUREGHA, European Regional and Local Health, Hospital Clinic de Barcelona, Barcelona, Belgium. 105Policlinica Geral do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro – Brasil 106Department of Medicine, Surgery and Dentistry “Scuola Medica Salernitana”, University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy. 107Peecode BV, Geldermalsen, The Netherlands. 108Social workers coordinator, Sorrento, Italy. 109Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro, School of Medicine and Surgery, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. 110Allergology and Immunology Discipline, “Iuliu Hatieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. 111Division of Clinical Immunology and Allergy, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. 112Laboratoire de Pharmacologie Respiratoire UPRES EA220, Hôpital Foch, Suresnes, Université Versailles Saint-Quentin, Université Paris Saclay, France. 113Farmacie Dei Golgi Group, Massa Lubrense, Italy. 114Rangueil-Larrey Hospital, Respiratory Diseases Department, Toulouse, France. 115University Clinic of Pulmonology and Allergy, Medical Faculty Skopje, R Macedonia. 116Mexico City, Mexico. 117Service de Pneumo-Allergologie, Centro Hospitalario-Universitario de Béni-Messous, Algiers, Algeria. 118Clinic of infectious, chest diseases, dermatology and allergy, Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania. 119Allergy and Clinical Immunology National Heart and Lung Institute, Imperial College London, UK. 120Guy’s and st Thomas’ NHS Trust, Kings College London, UK. 121Section of Allergy and Immunology, Saint Louis University School of Medicine, Saint Louis, Missouri, USA. 122Pediatric Allergy and Immunology Unit, Children’s Hospital, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt. 123Department of Computing Science, Umeå University, Sweden and Four Computing Oy, Finland. 124Clinic of Children’s Diseases, Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania. 125University of Sao Paulo Medical School, Sao Paulo, Brazil. 126Allergology and Immunology Division, Saint Louis University School of Medicine, Saint Louis, Missouri, USA. 127Pediatric Allergy and Immunology Unit, Children’s Hospital, Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt. 128Department of Medical Research and Communication Systems, University Hospital of South Manchester, Manchester, UK. 129Medical School, Surgery and Dentistry “Scuola Medica Salernitana”, University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy. 130National Center for Disease Control and Public Health, Georgia. 131Sleep Unit, Department of Neurology, Hôpital Gu-de-Chauliac Montpellier, Inserm U1061, France. 132Department of Internal Medicine, Federal University of Santa Catarina, Trindade, Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil. 133Section of Allergy and Immunology, Saint Louis University School of Medicine, Saint Louis, Missouri, USA. 134University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy. 135Department of Computing Science, Umeå University, Sweden and Four Computing Oy, Finland. 136Clinic of Children’s Diseases, Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania. 137University of Sao Paulo Medical School, Sao Paulo, Brazil. 138Andalusian Agency for Healthcare Quality, Seville, Spain. 139Global Allergy and Asthma Platform GAAPP, Vienna, Austria. 140Division of Allergy, Department of Pediatric Medicine - The Bambino Gesu’ Children’s Research Hospital Holy see, Rome, Italy. 141Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Amsterdam, University Medical Centres, AMC, Amsterdam the Netherlands. 142CIMITES, Center for Research in Health Technologies and Information Systems, Faculdade de Medicina da Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal and MEDIDA, Lda, Porto, Portugal. 143Allergist, Reims, France. 144Hospital general regional 1 Dr Carlos Mc Gregor Sanchez Navarro’IMSS, Mexico City, Mexico. 145Regional hospital of ISSSTE, Puebla, Mexico. 146National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia, Tbilisi, Georgia. 147Guadalara, Mexico. 148Allergy Clinic, National Institute of Respiratory Diseases, Mexico City, Mexico. 149Department of Pulmonary Diseases, Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa, Cerrahpasa Faculty of Medicine, Istanbul, Turkey. 150Allergology unit, UHATEM “NIPirogov” , Sofia, Bulgaria. 151Medical University, Faculty of Public Health, Sofia. 152Allergy and Immunology Division, Clinic Ricardo Palma, Lima, Peru. 153Department of Internal Medicine, section of Allergy, Erasmus MC, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. 154Allergy & Asthma Unit, Hospital San Bernardo Salta, Argentina. 155Allergy Clinic, Hospital Regional del ISSSTE Lic. Lopez Mateos', Mexico City, Mexico. 156Head and Professor, Centro Regional de Excelencia CONACYT y WAO en Alergia, Asma e Inmunologia, Hospital Universitario, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Monterrey NL, Mexico. 157Center of Allergy and Immunology, Georgian.
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