



# Congress Interviews



## Stefano del Giacco

Department of Experimental and Clinical Medicine, University of Cagliari, Italy; and European Academy of Allergy & Immunology (EAACI) President of Congresses



## Mohamed Shamji

Allergy and Clinical Immunology, National Heart and Lung Institute, Imperial College London, UK; and EAACI Vice-President of Congresses

### Citation:

EMJ Allergy Immunol. 2023;  
DOI/10.33590/emjallergyimmunol/10307335.  
<https://doi.org/10.33590/emjallergyimmunol/10307335>.

EMJ had the pleasure of interviewing Stefano del Giacco and Mohamed Shamji at EAACI 2023 in Hamburg, Germany. The experts shared insights into this year's congress in this exclusive roundtable interview.

**Q1** How is the European Academy of Allergy & Immunology (EAACI) supporting physicians and researchers with the best practices and tools to enable standard, high-quality care in allergy and asthma?

**S:** This is part of the EAACI mission; our guidelines and position papers are used daily by researchers, clinicians, and scientists around the world. We are striving to continuously update our papers and guidelines, and to work collaboratively with our sister societies to align guidelines.

**M:** In addition to the points Stefano has made, I would like to underline the success of the EAACI Congress 2023, here in Hamburg, Germany. We have over 7,000 attendants joining us physically, as well as many more who are participating virtually, and the majority of those participants are clinicians. This means we are reaching out to those allergy and immunology clinicians for the purposes of both education and best practices. This education is presented in the form of plenaries, symposia, lectures, and guidelines, and allows us to communicate all the relevant activities that are happening within EAACI. However, most important is the variety of attendees; we have scientists, clinicians, and allied health professionals, to name a few. We are bringing these people together and providing a translational approach from bench to bedside, with the aim of reaching out to our patients. The motto for the congress is 'precision medicine to personalised medical approaches in allergy and asthma', and we truly feel that we cover this.

---

**"We are bringing these people together and providing a translational approach from bench to bedside."**

---



**Q2** Are there any significant changes that you witnessed during your tenure as the President (del Giacco) and Vice-President (Shamji) of EAACI?

**S:** We have both been in our roles for 1 year now. However, as with previous EAACI leaders, we have brought our own touch to the academy and the congress. We had the heavy responsibility of starting again after the COVID-19 pandemic. Last year, we had a fantastic congress in Prague, Czechia; however, this was a trial run to allow us to come back full throttle this time around. This was mine and Shamji's task, and I am proud to say that this is something we feel we have fully accomplished.

Another priority for us is to bring a touch of innovation in every field, from technology to science to general topics. Additionally, to be open in a wider perspective to the wider community of science, from students to keynote speakers, and also to the lay public.

---

**"Another priority for us is to bring a touch of innovation in every field."**

---

**M:** I really feel the same! Coming out of COVID-19 has been one of the defining aspects of our presidency so far. The challenges this has posed in previous years with online and hybrid congresses have mirrored the outside world, with the rise of telemedicine for patients, and the technological advancements that have

followed, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. We are now in the position to implement the advancements made during the pandemic in an increasingly efficient way as we are now meeting face-to-face, networking, sharing ideas, and following them through to completion.

I am proud to say that we have truly taken lessons from the pandemic and applied them to our actions today. We have had fantastic support from within the society, which has allowed us to be where we are today.

**Q3** What are the most exciting changes that have been made to this year's EAACI programme, compared to the previous year's congress?

**M:** Last year, we focused on technology, with AI, telemedicine, molecular allergology, and translational medicine, which has always been at the heart of the EAACI mission. The key element for us this year is to take what we have learnt, and really focus on addressing the unmet needs both in patients and in the medical community in allergy and asthma. Additionally, we have moved the focus from precision medicine to personalised medicine. Precision medicine is incredibly important, and personalised medicine is even more essential, as we know the heterogeneity of patient responses when they receive treatment. With the novel tools that have been developed, we are now able to stratify patients, and really target patients with specific personalised treatments that we know they will

benefit from. Additionally, we are seeing many more biomarker-driven approaches to treatment alongside novel therapeutic development.

**S:** I fully agree. I would also like to highlight our key message, which is that we try to make real what has, for a long time, been just a discussion, such as AI, machine learning, precision medicine, and personalised treatments. We have tried to design a congress that brings together theory, but with a particular focus on shifting and translating theory into practice for our doctors and scientists. I strongly feel that this is one of the greatest achievements of the EAACI Congress 2023.

**Q4** Could you highlight any particular sessions or presentations that you highly recommend attending this year?

**S:** I would like to be a little original and recommend the keynote lecture, because it was very novel and different, focusing on observation, science, and medicine, and it raised important considerations for medical practice. The keynote focused on the importance of observing, not just seeing patients, which I feel is a general message to the medical community at large. When you start truly observing patients, you find new solutions. For example, with the pandemic, we saw the development of the COVID-19 vaccine and many new drugs in a

very short period. Usually it takes a much longer time to find solutions to these problems.

I would also recommend keeping an eye out for sessions on One Health, as it encompasses all of planetary health, including food, climate, and a number of other essential aspects of daily life that affect our health.

**M:** In addition to this, our plenary sessions are truly our flagship. These sessions span from bench to bedside, and are given by the best of the best, the true experts in the field. They pave the way, showing us how we can learn and improve our practice. Environmental science has become an increasingly important part of allergy and immunology, as the exposome has become a large challenge. Sessions exploring the epithelial barrier have been fantastic to attend, as they encompass the fundamental aspect of chronic disease, from basic, to translational, to public health concerns. For those interested in research, we have a huge number of abstract sessions, all unpublished work at the real cutting edge.

However, I must say that the highlight for me is the coming together of the EAACI family that occurs each year at congress. We have a membership of over 15,000, as well as physical participation of over 7,000 from Europe, the USA, and Asia, which demonstrates how we have grown into one of the largest allergy and immunology societies globally. ●

