

## New program brings Chinese physicians to meeting

**RHEUMATOLOGISTS** attending the annual meeting have a unique opportunity to interact with their colleagues from China through a new program debuting this year. The East Meets West Dialogue program, sponsored by the *China Medical Tribune*, has brought 19 Chinese rheumatologists to the annual meeting with the goal of creating new relationships with their Western colleagues. The Chinese rheumatologists will attend a variety of scientific sessions and social events during the week, including a welcome dinner and tours of local medical facilities.

The ACR's leadership hopes this program will build on relationships that have formed at meetings in previous years. "I was excited when we were approached about the possibility of hosting a delegation of rheumatologists from China at our annual meeting, although this won't be the

first time we've had representation from China," said ACR President Stanley B. Cohen, MD. "One of our Masters, Professor Chen, has attended the annual meeting for many years and brings students with him whenever possible."

The *China Medical Tribune*, a Chinese-language publication that covers medicine in China, created the program to help lower the barriers to participation in Western medical meetings for Chinese doctors in a number of specialties. *CMT* has helped more than 150 physicians attend medical meetings this year and expects to help more than 400 physicians travel abroad in 2011. *CMT* would like to thank Pfizer for its support of the 2010 East Meets West Dialogue program.

"During the past year, I've had the opportunity to interact with rheumatologists from all over the world, and our specialty

is growing worldwide," Dr. Cohen said. "It was clear from my visit to Hong Kong for APLAR that the interest in rheumatology is expanding, as demonstrated by the significant increase in the number of participants at the conference over the last several years. The growth in both basic science research and clinical research in Asia was reflected by the quality presentations at the meeting."

Mark Danderson, vice president of *CMT* in charge of foreign business development, said that the East Meets West Dialogue program is important because Chinese researchers are not integrating into the global community to a degree that would be expected at this stage of China's development. He cites several barriers to their participation, including cost and language skills. It is also difficult for Chinese doctors to get visas

to travel to Western countries. Finally, Chinese doctors are often unfamiliar with Western medical societies and lack connections with Western doctors that would naturally encourage communication and participation in Western medical meetings.

"I think the Chinese delegation will find our meeting exciting and stimulating," Dr. Cohen said, "and hopefully this exchange can be the first of many to come, as I think it is important to embrace our international colleagues as the world continues to become smaller. I encourage ACR members to make a special effort to get to know the physicians who will attend this year's meeting. The ACR is known for fostering lifelong friendships, and I think this program will be beneficial to ACR members from all over the world." ●