

AIRWAYS

the official newsletter for Allergen's Highly Qualified Entrepreneurial Personnel

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Allergen and CSACI unite for second annual trainee day

Allergen and the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (CSACI) hosted a trainee day in Montreal on October 26, 2006, on the heels of Allergen's Network-wide Research Workshop.

The focus of the event was to encourage trainees from Allergen and CSACI to interact with asthma and allergic disease experts. The day was packed with guest speakers, poster viewing, trainee oral presentations and networking sessions.

Dr. Kent HayGlass, chair of Allergen's Advanced Education Opportunities and Training Advisory Committee

(AETOAC), provided an overview of the Network's Highly Qualified Entrepreneurial Personnel (HQEP) program to the more than 80 investigators, researchers, trainees, staff and invited guests.

Other speakers included:

- Dr. Michael Cyr, Assistant Professor, Division of Clinical Immunology and Allergy at McMaster University, whose presentation, the *Immunology Platform of the Allergen Birth Cohort*, generated many questions from the audience
- Dr. Ruey Su, Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of Manitoba, addressed the "buzz" sur-

rounding Epigenetics

- Dr. Susan Wasserman, Associate Professor of Medicine, Division of Clinical Immunology and Allergy at McMaster University, discussed the *Factors Affecting Career Choices for Research*



Trainee Day at the Intercontinental Hotel in Montréal, PQ.

Poster Competition

Thirty-four posters were displayed at the workshop

See Trainee/page 3

The talk on Epigenetics "opened my eyes to collaborations that could be possible with colleagues in my institution."

- Post-workshop survey respondent

Who says there is nothing **HOT** going on in Hamilton in February?

Join us for Allergen's second annual research conference, February 11-13, 2007, at the Sheraton Hamilton Hotel, Hamilton, Ontario. *Innovation from cell to society²* features leading Allergen researchers, clinicians and trainees who will speak about issues and outcomes from the Network's three programmes

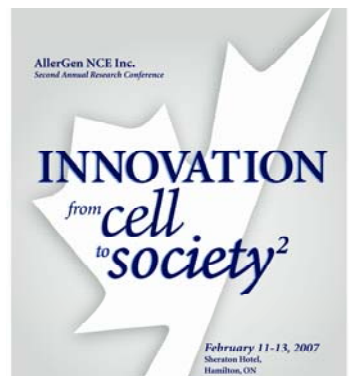
of research:

- Gene-Environment Interactions
- Diagnostics and Therapeutics
- Public Health, Policy and Society

Three internationally renowned keynote speakers—Dr. Craig Venter, Dr. John Frank and Dr. Michael Meaney—highlight the con-

ference.

Panel discussions featuring representatives from industry, government and research will offer educational looks at science, public policy and impacts on Canadians. The conference concludes with a Gala Dinner at the newly renovated world-class Art Gallery of Hamilton.



Register online at www.allergen-nce.ca

Full house at Analysis of Asthmatic Phenotype workshop in Montréal

The first in a series of AllerGen-supported specialized professional development workshops was held at the Montreal General Hospital and the Meakins Christie Laboratories in Montreal on October 24-25, 2006.



MSc Trainee Sarah Martin prepares a mouse for the assay

McGill University Professor Dr. Danuta Radzioch facilitated the workshop attended by

active AllerGen researchers and trainees interested in the physiological methods of phenotyping asthma in rodents.

Dr. Radzioch and members of her lab introduced the 12 participants—eight trainees, two investigators and two research associates—to various asthma phenotypes and discussed principles of Whole Body Plethysmography (WBP) analysis, and the analysis of resistance and elastance using the Harvard Apparatus Ventilator system and the *flexiVent* apparatus.

Participants had the opportunity to discuss the *flexiVent* apparatus with its developer, invited guest Dr. Thomas Schuessler, president of SCIREQ Scientific Respiratory Equipment Inc. Dr. Schuessler discussed impulse oscillometry analysis, and recent improvements and additions to the apparatus, leading to more efficient and effective use.

“It has saved our team quite a bit of invaluable time and our learning curve on the *flexiVent* system has been greatly accelerated,” says Ganesh Srinivasan, professor at the University of Manitoba. “We have also considered purchasing an add-on module for a system (that) we currently use, having seen and experienced its usefulness at work.”

Workshop participants observed instrument calibration, preparation of methacholine and data acquisition using animals exposed to increasing doses of methacholine. Attendees with safe animal training certification had the opportunity for hands-on experience, preparing the animals for the assay and operating a variety of equipment. Participants monitored allergic asthma phenotypes using Harvard Apparatus Ventilators, analyzed data, and calculated Penh from the generated data. At the Meakins Christie Laboratories, attendees observed the measurement of lung resistance and elastance using the *flexiVent* apparatus demonstrated by SCIREQ staff.

Although many participants had prior experience with some of the equipment, this workshop enabled them to discuss and share new and different ways to use the apparatus and evaluate the data generated—skills that they can use at their respective labs, increasing their research capabilities.

Gurpreet Singhera, a Theme III research associate at the James Hogg iCAPTURE Centre, says new skills acquired at the workshop will help her lab analyze the outcome of mice experiments after sensitization and challenge.

“This experience has given us another perspective to our animal experiments.”

Ideas for future specialized professional development events should be forwarded to Amber Bernard, AllerGen’s Communications and Program Coordinator, at abernar@mcmaster.ca.



SCIREQ staff demonstrate flexiVent apparatus

AllerGen trainee Anne Ellis receives fellowship

AllerGen joined forces earlier this year with Bayer Inc. and the Canadian Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Foundation (CAAIF) to create the *Immunodeficiency and Immunomodulation of Allergic Inflammation Clinician-Scientist Research Fellowship* worth \$110,000 over two years.

AllerGen’s International Scientific Advisory Committee unanimously awarded AllerGen trainee Dr. Anne Ellis with the AllerGen/Bayer/CAAIF fellowship to conduct research in the area of allergic disease. The fellowship aims to encourage trainee development and contribute to improved patient care and excellence in research by increasing the number and level of expertise of MDs in Canada with a specialty in allergy and clinical immunology. According to a Canadian Institute for Health Information report, only 129 specialists were practicing in immunology and allergy in Canada in 2004. That translates into one allergic and immune disease specialist for every 247,863 Canadians.

Dr. Ellis received a well-deserved round of applause along with a commemorative plaque at AllerGen’s Network-wide Research Workshop in Montreal in October. Through her research—*Early life molecular markers of the eosinophil lineage: Relevance to allergic inflammation and disease*—Dr. Ellis hopes to uncover markers that predict who will become allergic in the future, enabling researchers and clinicians to better target preventive therapies.

“CAAIF and Bayer Inc. are excited to be involved in this ever increasingly important research field,” said Dr. Eric Leith, chair of CAAIF’s Board of Directors and a member of the AllerGen Board of Directors.

AllerGen is delighted to have an individual of Dr. Ellis’ capabilities supported by the HQEP program and looks forward to her research results.

Trainee Day continued from page 1

and 13 trainees gave oral presentations. Marcelo Marcet-Palacios, a PhD student at the University of Alberta, received \$300 for the Best Oral Presentation. Best Poster Display (also worth \$300) went to Marie-Renee Blanchet, a Postdoctoral trainee at the University of British Columbia. Runners-up Yohan Bossé (oral presentation), a Postdoctoral Fellow at McGill University, and Tillie Hackett (poster display), a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of British Columbia, each received \$200.



Poster Display winner Marie-Renee Blanchet with Dr. Kent HayGlass

The competition was judged by AllerGen Scientific Director Dr. Judah Denburg (McMaster University), AllerGen Theme III Leader Dr. Dean Befus (University of Alberta), Dr. Kent HayGlass and Dr. Anita Kozyrskj (University of Manitoba).

The networking and poster viewing reception, along with the oral presentations, gave trainees an opportunity to showcase their research and discover possible collaborations.

Sarah Martin, a Master's student at the University of Manitoba, says being a trainee in the AllerGen Network has afforded her new opportunities.

"The biggest benefit of being a new member...is the opportunity to meet people doing research in similar fields. As a new Master's student, the network allows me the opportunity to make

New fellowships/studentships available to trainees

AllerGen partnered with select Strategic Training Initiatives in Health Research (STIHR) to create trainee opportunities in the form of new fellowships and studentships.

AllerGen's HQEP program is matching STIHR funding to create new positions in existing STIHRs for trainees studying allergic and immune diseases. By partnering with STIHR programs, AllerGen aims to realize its goal of increasing Canada's research capacity in allergic and related immune diseases.

This initiative is part of a series to help fulfill one of AllerGen's strategic goals: to create new opportunities for the training of highly qualified entrepreneurial personnel in allergy research, innovation and the health system, and advance professional and lay knowledge about allergic and related immune diseases.

AllerGen is currently partnered with four STIHRs:

- Allergy and Asthma: From Molecular Regulation to Population Health (University of Manitoba)
- Training Program in Diseases of Immunopathogenesis and Inflam-

mation (University of Calgary)

- Training Centre in Integrative Biology of Infectious Diseases and Autoimmunity (McGill University)
- Integrated and Mentored Pulmonary and Cardiovascular Training (University of British Columbia)

www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca

To qualify for an AllerGen-funded STIHR training

position, an applicant's research proposal must be relevant to allergic and related immune diseases. The proposed research must have potential to reduce the morbidity, mortality and socio-economic impact of allergic disease. These fellowships and studentships must represent additional training opportunities that would not have otherwise have been supported by a STIHR program, but which meet the criteria for STIHR support.

AllerGen will hold competitions semi-annually through 2009, at which time the future of the program will be decided based on its success and relevance to AllerGen's strategic goals. For more information on these studentships and fellowships, contact the individual STIHR Program Coordinators.

"The day helped me gain a sense of the allergy and immunology research being conducted across Canada."

- Post-workshop survey respondent

valuable future career contacts."

AllerGen organizers welcome feedback on this event. Trainee day attendees are asked to fill out the online post-workshop survey at www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?



Dr. Anne Ellis receives ABC Fellowship

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Call for Abstracts

AllerGen is hosting a Trainee Poster Competition at the upcoming 2nd Annual Conference: Innovation from cell to society². The competition aims to increase the visibility of research pertinent to AllerGen's mission. It also provides an opportunity for trainees to share their research, exchange ideas, and network with other researchers, clinicians, and policy and decision makers.

The deadline for abstract submissions is Friday, December 15, 2006. The competition form and guidelines can be found on the AllerGen website, www.allergen-nce.ca.

For more information contact Amber Bernard at abernar@mcmaster.ca.

HQEP declare 1st Annual Trainee Symposium a hit

AllerGen's First Annual Trainee Symposium held in King City, Ontario, May 31 and June 1, 2006, focused on promoting the personal and professional development of Network Trainees.

The symposium was attended by 39 trainees—more than 50 percent of the total number of trainees in the Network at that time.

Participants gave their highest praise to the *Insider's Guide to Career Opportunities*—an interactive panel featuring representatives from academia, government, industry and the private sector. The panel provided trainees with first-hand accounts of various careers in the field of allergic and related immune diseases.

AllerGen Board of Directors member Dr. Claude Roy opened the symposium with an entertaining and informative keynote address on *Rethinking Science in the Context of the Transformation of Society*. Dr. David Phipps, director of the Office of Research Services at York University, talked about *Knowledge Mobilization*—

providing valuable information on what it is, why researchers should be thinking

about it, and how it can impact non-patentable research results. Participants were also treated to an interactive session—*How to Write and Review a High Impact Research Paper*—led by two AllerGen principal investigators, Dr. Kent HayGlass and Dr. Anita Kozyrskyj, and Network trainee Renee Denville.

A poster competition featuring 26 oral poster presentations closed the symposium. The competition gave the trainees a rare opportunity to evaluate their peers. Congratulations to winners MyLinh Duong (1st prize \$500), Anne Ellis (2nd prize, \$300) and John Brannan (3rd prize, \$200).



Poster competition winners John Brannan and Anne Ellis with Communications and Program Coordinator Amber Bernard

www.allergen-nce.ca

Network News

Fall 2006 AllerGen-STIHR Competition

Congratulations to Dr. Jian Zhang, Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of British Columbia, for her successful application for the Fall 2006 AllerGen-STIHR competition. Dr. Zhang was awarded a fellowship position within the Integrated and Mentored Pulmonary and Cardiovascular Training (IMPACT) STIHR located at the James Hogg iCAPTURE Centre.

Announcements

Welcome back to Theme I Coordinator Treena McDonald, iCAPTURE Centre who returned from maternity leave in October.

Agatha Blancas, University of Toronto, has joined Pearl Davis, St. Joseph's Hospital, as Co-Theme II Coordinator.

Good luck to Jaim Sutton (former Theme I Coordinator) and Lyssa Cheng (former Theme II Coordinator) on their future endeavors.
