

Research Leaders Convene at AllerGen Annual Conference

“It’s a world class summit of allergic and immune disease experts,” say the organizers of AllerGen’s fifth annual *Innovation from cell to society* research conference, held this year in Quebec City. This event offers the Canadian research community unprecedented access to critical information on new developments from within the AllerGen network and around the world. At the same time, the conference provides attendees a greater awareness of AllerGen research results in its core programmes, “gene-environment interactions,” “diagnostics and therapeutics” and “public health, ethics, policy and society.”

“AllerGen enables Canada’s leadership in priority areas of allergic disease research,” says CEO and Scientific Director Dr. Judah Denburg. “This conference makes the latest allergic disease research from across disciplines available to all attendees.”

The three-day event kicks-off with a keynote speech from Dr. Stephen Holgate, Clinical Professor of Immunopharmacology at Southampton General Hospital in the United Kingdom. In his address, Dr. Holgate will focus on new horizons in allergy and lung health research.

Over the three days of the conference, attendees will also have an opportunity to gain insight into many other recent allergy, asthma and anaphylaxis research results. Sessions with knowledge leaders from across Canada and around the world will provide valuable insights into pressing societal and scientific allergic disease challenges.

There are 185 conference delegates attending this year’s event. Many of them are AllerGen researchers, clinician-scientists, research trainees and new professionals. “Equally important,

Innovation from cell to society⁵



given AllerGen’s knowledge translation and research commercialization mandate,” says AllerGen COO Dr. Diana Royce, “are the significant number of attendees from government, industry and patient-based non-profit organizations, as well as researchers from leading research centres around the world.”

Dr. Denburg adds, “The significant proportion of research trainees, and the 51 research posters on display, underscores what an important opportunity this is for the next generation of Canadian researchers. At the conference and within the Network, they have an unprecedented opportunity to work with and learn from internationally recognized allergic disease research leaders from across disciplines who are working in collaboration with research partners from across sectors and around the world. This is another way that AllerGen ensures that Canada is a global leader in this field for the foreseeable future.”

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Innovation from cell to society

New AllerGen Studentship and Fellowship Competitions

Eligible applicants have until March 1, 2010 to apply for a share of more than \$455,000 in AllerGen capacity building awards including \$176,000 in partnered studentships and a new \$125,000 Clinical-Scientists Fellowship.

AllerGen's studentships program, of which half of the \$330,000 in partnered awards was issued earlier this year, supports capacity building in allergic and related immune disease research and clinical care.

AllerGen training awards program is open to undergraduate summer students, and students pursuing an MD, Masters, PhD or Post-doctoral degree. To be eligible, applicants must be Canadian citizens or hold Canadian permanent resident status. They must also be enrolled or accepted in a full-time degree program at a Canadian university.

AllerGen and its partners will consider applications that align with the organization's three research thrusts and are of strategic importance to the generation of new knowledge with the potential for social and economic impact in the areas of allergy, asthma and anaphylaxis.

AllerGen has also launched a national competition for a Clinician-Scientist Research Fellowship. This prestigious award is valued at \$125,000 over two years. The goal of this award is to develop Canadian clinical investigators pursuing allergy, asthma and/or

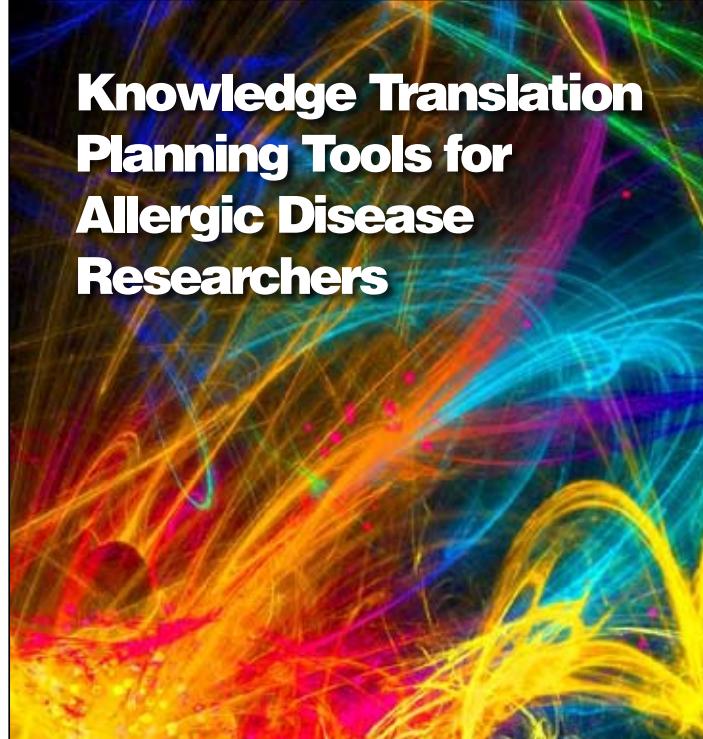
anaphylaxis academic research training simultaneously with and/or immediately following their Allergy/Clinical Immunology (A/CI) sub-specialty training.

This fellowship aims to increase the numbers and level of academic excellence of MDs with a specialty in allergy and clinical immunology, enhance patient care and increase translational allergy and clinical immunology research and academic capacity in Canada.

Eligible candidates are Canadian health professionals who are completing their A/CI sub-specialty training or have completed such sub-specialty training within the past 18 months and have a posting at an academic health sciences centre. Preference will be given to applicants whose host institution can confirm that the applicant has been identified for a junior faculty position following successful completion of this fellowship.

AllerGen encourages applicants to secure matching funding to a level commensurate with their level of clinical training.

For information about these and other training programs please check the funding and training link under the Training and Careers tab on the AllerGen Website. (www.allergen-nce.ca)



**Knowledge Translation
Planning Tools for
Allergic Disease
Researchers**

AllerGen
Allergy, Genes and Environment Network

Knowledge Translation - Focusing on the End-user

AllerGen has published an important new workbook for allergy, asthma and anaphylaxis researchers, research trainees and their collaborating partner organizations. It is called **Knowledge Translation Tools for Allergic Disease Researchers**. This tool aims to facilitate the integration of research and research use from the outset of each AllerGen-supported project. The tool provides research teams and their partner organizations with a step-by-step process for developing a research strategy that focuses on potential end-uses and users of their research results. The tool helps research teams position uses and users "front and centre" in every project that AllerGen supports.

"It is an important concept that is sometimes overlooked," says AllerGen Managing Director and COO Dr. Diana Royce. "Now, with this workbook in hand, our researchers can develop a plan that will ensure that the application of their research results will be readily recognized and applied to the generation of social and economic benefits for Canadians."

The tool was adapted from a highly successful publication initially developed for stroke researchers. Through its 30 pages the readers will find a series of comprehensive checklists that take them through all the steps required to define **Knowledge Translation** goals, identify audiences and set strategies.

The tool was released at an AllerGen Network-wide research workshop held in Toronto in December 2009. It is available as a download from the AllerGen website. Hardcopies are available from the administrative centre for \$12. (905-525-9140 ext 26502)

Canadian Healthy Infant Longitudinal Development (CHILD) Study



AllerGen is supporting a multi-year, multi-site study of the ways in which gene-environment interactions and early life exposures impact the subsequent development of allergy and asthma in Canadian children. Recruitment for the **Canadian Healthy Infant Longitudinal Development (CHILD) Study** began in 2009 at four sites across Canada: the University of British Columbia, University of Alberta, University of Manitoba and The Hospital for Sick Children.

The administrative headquarters is based at McMaster University in Hamilton. Study Director is Dr. Malcolm Sears, an internationally renowned asthma clinician-scientist. Over \$13 million has been committed to this groundbreaking initiative to date - \$6 million from each of AllerGen and CIHR and the balance from private and non-profit sources.

The International Partnership Initiative

In January 2010 Canadian researchers and the El Salvadoran medical community signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a joint Asthma research project to be based at the Saldana Hospital in El Salvador. The project is part of AllerGen's International Partnership Initiative (IPI).

Dr. Dean Befus of the University of Alberta was instrumental in creating this international bridge as the leader of AllerGen's collaboration with the International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD). A major aim of this collaboration is to enable Canadians and colleagues in low and middle income countries and marginalized communities to work together to improve global lung health.

This partnership provides opportunities for the exchange of medical and research personnel and students and facilitates the flow of important research and clinical data.

This is one of several international initiatives AllerGen is participating in around the world. AllerGen's IPI partnerships include:

- The Global European Allergy and Asthma Network (GA²LEN) in Belgium. GA²LEN is the only other allergic disease network in the world.
- Karolinska Institute - Centre for Allergy Research, Stockholm, Sweden.

- Global Alliance against chronic Respiratory Diseases (GARD) and the Allergic Rhinitis and its Impact on Asthma (ARIA) Study Group – both World Health Organization (WHO) initiatives – hosted in France and Switzerland.
- IUATLD, hosted in France, with a special focus on activities in El Salvador and Mexico.
- Institute of Population Health and Clinical Research of the St. John's Research Institute, Bangalore, India.

In addition to these partnerships, AllerGen has also invested in five additional, emerging international collaborations with the Humboldt/Helmholtz Institutes (Germany), and research teams in Taiwan, China, Israel and the USA.

Representatives from a number of these organizations will be participating at AllerGen's annual conference in Quebec City. Dr. Sven-Erik Dahlén, Director of the Center for Allergy Research at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden and Dr. Krishnamachari Srinivasan, Vice Dean of St. John's Research Institute in Bangalore, India will both be making presentations during the conference about the value and successes of their collaborations with AllerGen. In addition, Dr. Teresa To, an AllerGen investigator at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, will provide an update on the Respiratory Global Research and Training (GREAT) Network, a global surveillance data gathering training centre she established as a result of AllerGen's IPI collaboration with the GARD.

AllerGen Set to Hold Its First Public Forum on Allergies and Asthma

In late May 2010, the general public will have a unique opportunity to get answers to many of their questions and concerns about allergies and asthma from a noted panel of experts in the field. AllerGen is inviting the public to meet with a prestigious group of researchers at the organization's first "Café Scientifique." The event is seed-funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) as part of its ongoing commitment to knowledge translation. It will be held at the Royal Botanical Gardens Café in Burlington, Ontario on May 31.

The panel consists of three clinician-scientists who are currently undertaking AllerGen-supported allergic disease research and are either asthma or allergy specialists. On the panel are Dr. Ann Clarke, Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, McGill University; Dr. Malcolm Sears, Professor, Division of Respiratory at St. Joseph's Healthcare and Dr. Allan Becker, Professor, Section of Allergy & Clinical Immunology, Department of Pediatrics & Child Health, University of Manitoba and Consultant Allergist, Children's Hospital of Winnipeg.

The event is an effort to dispel the high level of confusion among the general public about the prevalence and impact of asthma and allergies. Many people don't know whether or not they should be concerned. They are uncertain about precautions that

they should take, if any. This confusion is often heightened by sloppy reporting in the media. A good example is the controversial article *It's Just Nuts*, which appeared in the December 2009 issue of Chatelaine magazine. This article contained many inaccuracies. Ultimately it misrepresented the risks and prevalence associated with peanut allergies.



It is hoped that by bringing together research experts and the public at the Café Scientifique, discussion can be generated between researchers, patients, parents, teachers and other members of the public. This process of engagement can help to counteract circulating misinformation with respect to allergic disease and create greater awareness and support of the best available evidence in this field.

It is AllerGen's intention that this inaugural *Café Scientifique* will be the prototype for additional forums to be held across the country, in regions close to AllerGen's partner institutions.

The *Café Scientifique* concept was pioneered by CIHR. CIHR's mandate is to "excel in the creation of new knowledge and its translation into improved health for Canadians, more effective health services and products and a strengthened Canadian health-care system."

Ethics in Focus at AllerGen Workshop, Toronto

Ethics experts from across Canada participated in a groundbreaking AllerGen-sponsored ethics workshop and networking session in Toronto in mid-December. Invited speakers, who are working at the leading edge of research ethics policy and processes in Canada, provided insight into relevant ethical and legal issues and related challenges.

There was a major focus on the challenges associated with interdisciplinary and multi-jurisdictional research - particularly for large cohort studies and multi-site research projects. AllerGen will be posting audio and video of this Ethics workshop, as well as the biographies and presentations from each of the invited speakers, on the AllerGen website this spring.

AllerGen Provides \$11 Million for Canadian Asthma and Allergy Research

Investigators at 15 Canadian universities from across Canada are participating in \$11 million of studies aimed at reducing the morbidity, mortality and socio-economic burden of allergic and other related immune diseases. AllerGen NCE (the Allergy, Genes and Environment Network) supports 20 teams of investigators working across eight Canadian provinces. All are involved in multi-disciplinary, networked and partnered programmes of research that will contribute to understanding, preventing, controlling or eliminating allergies, asthma and anaphylaxis.

Since 2005, AllerGen has been investing in three research programmes of strategic importance to the health of Canadians. These programmes - *Gene-Environment Interactions; Diagnostics and Therapeutics; and Public Health, Ethics, Policy and Society* - are dedicated to the generation of new knowledge with potential for social and economic impact in the areas of allergic and related immune disease.