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The NCE program is a joint initiative of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Industry Canada.



Building bridges

AllerGen engaging in partnering strategy

AllerGen is forging new national and global partnerships in research, development and capacity building that is consistent with the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Canada mandate of developing new knowledge and transmitting that knowledge to those who can generate social and economic benefits for Canadians.

To that end, AllerGen is actively engaged at both the individual research project and Network-wide levels, initiating and fostering new relationships to expand the reach of the Network.

Joining forces with the Asthma Society of Canada

AllerGen is partnering with the Asthma Society of Canada (ASC), taking an active role in an initiative that aims to improve the quality of life for Canadians suffering from allergy, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

AllerGen Scientific Director Dr. Judah Denburg has engaged in preliminary meetings with representatives from the ASC to discuss a collaboration focussed on the creation of a national strategy to control these chronic diseases.

Dr. Oxana Latycheva, ASC vice-president of Asthma Control Programming, believes this collaboration could be "one of the strongest partnerships in terms of the long-term benefits for patients suffering from asthma and allergies."

She believes that AllerGen's status as a leader in the field of allergic disease will aid the ASC in realizing its goal to improve the lives

of those suffering from allergic disease, asthma and COPD.

"The ASC is delighted to partner with AllerGen on many initiatives aimed to improve care for patients with asthma and allergies and making sure that Canadians suffering with asthma and allergies get the care they need and deserve," she says.

Longwoods Publishing, the publisher of academic, scientific and professional journals in the health care field—management, practice, education, research and product development—is the official media sponsor for AllerGen's annual research conference, *Innovation from Cell to Society*².

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*He that would be a leader
must be a bridge.*

-Welsh proverb

AllerGen NCE Inc. is dedicated to creating an enduring network of allergy and immune disease experts whose discovery and development efforts contribute to reducing the impact of allergic and related immune diseases in Canada and around the world.

Collaboration key to success

Dr. Ann Clarke of McGill University is leading a multidisciplinary team with expertise in geography, immunology, nursing and social sciences, consisting of 14 researchers drawn from academe, industry, government and not-for-profit organizations.

Network-supported research will focus on anaphylaxis management, social support networks and food labelling. Research results will impact policy development, health care management, development of tools to improve self-management, coordination of peer support and education.

This integrated programme of research aims to improve the well-being and quality of life for children and youth living with allergic disease.

Partnering opportunities in CHILD study

AllerGen continues to seek new partnering opportunities for the Canadian Healthy Infant Longitudinal Development study, a birth cohort to examine the root causes and track the development of asthma/allergy from birth to age six.

Several representatives from AllerGen and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) met in Toronto on Nov. 24, 2006, to discuss the development of the study and CIHR's commitment to the project.

"This collaborative initiative will bring together experts from AllerGen's research programme and the public and private sectors," says AllerGen Scientific Director Dr. Judah Denburg.

CHILD proposes to collect data on multiple risk factors for allergy and asthma, including indoor/outdoor environmental exposures, infections, nutrition, and immunologic responses and their interactions with genetic and host factors.

"The impacts of the CHILD study will be enduring and far-reaching. Outcomes from a study of this magnitude will inform the diagnosis, treatment and policy of allergic and related immune disease," Dr. Denburg says. "It will be a Canadian first in allergic disease research."

To learn more about partnership opportunities within the CHILD study, please contact AllerGen's Managing Director, Dr. Diana Royce, at (905) 525-9140 ext 26502.

AllerGen's CIC: Showing results

AllerGen's **Clinical Investigator Collaborative (CIC)**—a clinical trials consortium that tests early stage molecules and compounds proposed to treat asthma and allergy—has expanded to five locations across Canada.

- Laval University (Dr. L-P Boulet)
- McMaster University (Dr. P. O'Byrne)
- University of Alberta (Dr. I. Mayers)
- University of British Columbia (Dr. M. Fitzgerald)
- University of Saskatchewan (Dr. D. Cockcroft)

So far, the CIC has completed two clinical trials, is analyzing the data for another, is in the midst of conducting one trial and has another four companies in queue for future trials.

Focussing on the future

Members of the Network's Board of Directors and Research Management Committee focussed on a critical assessment of AllerGen's vision, mission and strategic priorities at a recent board retreat, Nov. 14-15, 2006. The Network's strategic directions were refined, reflecting AllerGen's commitment to results-oriented research programmes directly benefitting Canadians.

AllerGen's Vision

AllerGen will create an enduring network of allergy and immune disease experts whose discovery and development efforts contribute to reductions in the impact of allergic and related immune diseases nationally and globally.

AllerGen's Mission

To catalyze and support discovery, development, networking, capacity building, commercialization and knowledge translation that contribute to reducing the morbidity, mortality and socio-economic burden of allergic and related immune diseases.

AllerGen's Strategic Priorities

1. Catalyze and support innovative research that contributes to the **discovery** of the causes of, and ways to prevent, control or eliminate allergic and related immune diseases.
2. Create new opportunities for the **training** of highly qualified entrepreneurial personnel in allergy research, patient care, innovation and the health system, and advance professional and lay knowledge about allergic and related immune diseases.
3. Catalyze and facilitate the **development** of new research platforms, tools, processes, products and services arising from discoveries, and promote their commercialization, their use and their influence on public policy.
4. Develop and maintain **networking** and **partnership** arrangements that enable knowledge and technology exchange and exploitation (KTEE).
5. Provide responsible, cost effective and accountable **management**, administration and support to all aspects of AllerGen's activities.

AllerGen co-sponsors Network researcher's talk

Dr. Thomas Hudson, a Principal Investigator in AllerGen's Gene-Environment Interactions programme of research, recently spoke to more than 50 professionals and students at the McMaster University Medical Centre about *Genome Variation and Common Disease*, including genetic methods used to identify asthma genes, leading to new concepts in disease pathophysiology.

The event, held on Jan. 12, 2007, was part of the Centre's *General*

Rounds series where speakers are invited to give short talks on relevant medical topics. AllerGen co-sponsored the talk with Network partner, Merck Frosst. This past summer, Dr. Hudson left McGill University in Montreal to take the helm at the new Ontario Institute for Cancer Research. As scientific director and president of the provincial organization, Dr. Hudson heads up a large team of investigators and directs a budget of more than \$300 million over the next five years.

Fellowship aims to improve patient care

AllerGen joined forces with Bayer Inc. and the Canadian Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Foundation (CAAIF) in 2006 to create the Immunodeficiency and Immunomodulation of Allergic Inflammation Clinician-Scientist Research Fellowship worth \$110,000 over two years.



Dr. Anne Ellis

AllerGen's International Scientific Advisory Committee unanimously awarded AllerGen trainee Dr. Anne Ellis the first 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.

Special thanks to retiring Board members

AllerGen would like to thank Dr. Redwan Moqbel, Dr. Simon Pimstone, Dr. Terry Sullivan and Dr. Lorne Tyrrell for completing their terms as directors of the Network's governing board and for their contributions to the launch and operation of AllerGen during its first two years of activity.

AllerGen would like to welcome Dr. John Bienenstock, McMaster University, as the newest member of the Board of Directors. Dr. Bienenstock was elected by Network investigators as their representative on the Board.

Thanks to former RMC member

Dr. Cameron Mustard, University of Toronto, has resigned his position on the Research Management Committee. AllerGen thanks Dr. Mustard for his contributions to the Network through his work on the RMC.

New leadership for AllerGen research programme

Dr. Susan Elliott, Dean of Social Sciences at McMaster University, has accepted the role of co-leader of AllerGen's Public Health, Policy and Society programme of research. Dr. Elliott is also a member of the Network's Research Management Committee.

Website Launch

AllerGen has launched a new-look website. The new design provides researchers, partners and the public with more user-friendly access to AllerGen information. Visit www.allergen-nce.ca.

Congratulations

AllerGen Board member Dr. Doug Barber has been named an Officer of the Order of Canada. The Order of Canada recognizes outstanding achievements by Canadians in various fields. As an Officer, he will be recognized for a lifetime of achievement in service to Canada or humanity at large. In 1973, Dr. Barber co-founded Burlington's Gennum Corp.

Media Watch

AllerGen Scientific Director Dr. Judah Denburg and Principal Investigator Dr. Susan Wasserman will appear on a Global Television special on allergies, airing this spring.

Full house at workshop

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.

McGill University Professor Dr. Danuta Radzioch facilitated the two-day *Analysis of Asthmatic Phenotype* workshop attended by 12 AllerGen researchers and trainees. The sharing of different analytical approaches, ways to use various equipment and best practices have the potential to increase research capabilities at various labs across the country.

"This experience has given us a new perspective on our animal experiments," says Gurpreet Singhera, an AllerGen research associate at the James Hogg iCAPTURE Centre. She says new skills acquired at the AllerGen workshop will help her lab to better analyze the outcomes of animal experiments.

On the heels of the workshop, AllerGen and the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (CSACI) hosted a joint trainee day in Montreal, attended by more than 80 researchers, trainees and invited guests.

The focus of the event was to encourage trainees from AllerGen and CSACI to interact with asthma and allergic disease experts. Sessions included guest speakers, networking, poster viewing and oral presentations by trainees.

Longwoods Publishing

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Longwoods is providing a reading list of articles from its vast on-line library related to the conference theme *Innovation from Cell to Society*. The list is distributed to event registrants who can download articles at www.longwoods.com in advance of the conference.

Media organizations are strategic partners that help AllerGen mobilize the translation of knowledge both to professionals and partners within the network, and to inform and educate the Canadian public.

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