



Allergy, Genes and Environment Network  
Le réseau des allergies, des gènes et de l'environnement

## AllerGen Announces \$250,000 Emerging Clinician-Scientist Research Fellowship Award Winner

Combatting the shortage of allergy and clinical immunology specialists in Canada

*For Immediate Release*

**Montreal, QC (April 11, 2011)** – Today AllerGen NCE Inc., the Allergy, Genes and Environment Network (AllerGen), a national research network, announced **Dr. Moshe Ben-Shoshan**, from McGill University and the Montreal Children's Hospital, Montreal, Quebec, as the inaugural winner of a prestigious national ***Emerging Clinician-Scientist Research Fellowship*** award valued at \$250,000. This award is an innovative solution to the shortage of allergy and clinical immunology researchers and specialists in Canada.

Dr. Ben-Shoshan completed his pediatric residency at Sourasky medical center in Tel-Aviv, Israel and subsequently completed his fellowship in Pediatric Allergy/Clinical Immunology at Montreal Children's Hospital in 2009. He worked as a research fellow under the mentorship of Dr. Ann Clarke, Professor, Department of Medicine, McGill University, over the past year. His primary research interest is the epidemiology of food allergy. He is currently a physician in the Department of Allergy and Immunology at Montreal Children's Hospital and is involved in several research initiatives on food allergy and anaphylaxis.

The goal of the *AllerGen Emerging Clinician-Scientist Research Fellowship* is to enable Canadian Allergists and Clinical Immunologists to pursue allergy, asthma and/or anaphylaxis academic research training immediately following sub-specialty training in order to:

- Increase the number of medical students pursuing an Allergy and Clinical Immunology sub-specialty and undertaking related basic and/or clinical research while serving Canadians suffering from asthma, allergies and related immune diseases
- Increase research capacity in the field of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, and
- Foster and enhance academic innovation arising from basic and clinical research.

AllerGen Scientific Director and CEO, Dr. Judah A. Denburg, stated: "AllerGen is delighted that this award will allow Dr. Ben-Shoshan to launch his career as a clinician-scientist. AllerGen's *Emerging Clinician-Scientist Research Fellowship* support will retain him in Canada and accelerate his clinical research programme, which focuses on food allergy in children. Food allergy research is a priority area for AllerGen investment, since food allergy is a major societal concern, with its increasing prevalence, and accompanying risk of life-threatening anaphylaxis and many challenges which food allergic patients face in everyday settings like schools, public transportation and restaurants."

Dr. Ann Clarke adds "while it is commonly accepted that approximately 4% of Canadians have food allergies, recent research shows that 7.5% of Canadians report that they believe they have at least one food allergy." These results will soon be published.

Nearly one in three Canadians suffers from some form of allergic illness, and the associated healthcare and socio-economic costs are significant. For example, the recently completed

**Asthma Insight and Management in Europe and Canada survey (EUCAN AIM) survey (2010)** confirmed that asthma continues to have a significant impact on the Canadian healthcare system and workforce. Survey respondents indicated that they operated at 83% productivity on a typical day and at only 56% on a day when their asthma symptoms were at their worst. Limitations on specific activities and thus, impacts on quality of life, were reportedly significant for Canadians with asthma. Similar data are available for allergic rhinitis (hayfever), which lowers school productivity in children.

The subspecialty of Allergy and Clinical Immunology is facing serious manpower shortages now and for the foreseeable future. With a surge in the prevalence of allergy and immune-related diseases over the past 10-20 years, especially among children, the need for Allergy & Clinical Immunology services and specialists is at an all-time high.

Dr. Stuart Carr, President of the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology and Assistant Professor & Director, Division of Allergy & Clinical Immunology, Department of Pediatrics at the University of Alberta, and clinician with Alberta Health Services, states, "There is a dire need to train more Canadian allergists and retain outstanding international clinician-scientists to meet the healthcare needs of Canadian families." Dr. Carr notes also that, "The number of allergy and clinical immunology specialists trained in Canada is not keeping pace with the number of specialists needed to meet the increasing demand for the services of this subspecialty. In many regions of Canada, patients can wait anywhere from six months to over a year to see an allergist, and in some regions of Canada there are no allergists at all. AllerGen's *Emerging Clinician-Scientist Research Fellowship* award will help attract and train much needed allergic disease specialists and create new opportunities for clinical, academic-based research of direct benefit to patients."

Dr. Chris Mody, Chair of AllerGen's Advanced Education and Training Advisory Committee and Professor of Internal Medicine and Microbiology and Infectious Diseases and Director, Division of Pulmonary Medicine, University of Calgary and Chief, Division of Respiriology, University of Calgary and Alberta Health Services, agrees that AllerGen's Fellowship will help to address the current shortages of allergists in Canada. He notes, "With such low physician numbers in the Allergy & Clinical Immunology specialty, there is growing concern about aging Canadian physician demographics, the number of pending retirements within this profession and a lack of new doctors entering the field to meeting the growing demand for patient care for allergic disease sufferers."

To underscore the severity of the current shortage of allergists in Canada, one need only to look at the 1975 CMA study, which recommended that there be one allergist per every 100,000 Canadians in order to adequately meet societal needs. In Canada, according to the 2010 census report, there are only 153 allergy and clinical immunology specialists. Given our current population, there is just one allergist and/or clinical immunologist per 223,777 Canadians.

Given the increased prevalence of food-related allergies amongst Canadians, keeping talent within our borders is vital and aligned with AllerGen's strategic goal to create new opportunities for the training of highly qualified personnel in allergy research, patient care, innovation and the health system, while advancing the profession.

AllerGen's mission is 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 NCE Inc. invests in research and training undertaken by leading Canadian investigators aimed at the generation of new knowledge about the causes, treatment and prevention of allergic disease, asthma and anaphylaxis. AllerGen is a national research network dedicated to improving the quality of life for people suffering from allergic and related immune diseases. AllerGen is funded by Industry Canada through the federal Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program. The Network is hosted at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

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The logo for the Government of Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a small Canadian flag above the letter "a".