

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AllerGen Investigator's Environmental Research Featured in CBC's *Marketplace* episode *Burned*

Airing Friday November 30, 2012 at 8 pm (8:30 in Newfoundland and Labrador)

Toronto, ON (30 November 2012) - **AllerGen NCE** (Allergy, Genes and Environment Network of Centres of Excellence) investigator, **Miriam Diamond**, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Toronto, is featured in an episode of CBC's *Marketplace* airing Friday November 30, 2012 at 8 pm (8:30 in Newfoundland and Labrador).

A CBC investigation, undertaken with Miriam Diamond's assistance, revealed that some chemical flame-retardants used in home furnishings have limited ability to stop or slow house fires and can pose a variety of health hazards.

In a study undertaken in Toronto, Dr. Diamond found traces of chemical flame-retardants throughout local homes – in objects ranging from furniture and computer equipment to kitchen appliances and carpet backing. Household dust containing flame-retardant particles is a major source of exposure to the human body and especially to toddlers.

AllerGen researchers are also studying household dust and phthalates as part of the AllerGen and Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)-supported birth cohort study - *The Canadian Healthy Infant Longitudinal Development (CHILD) Study*.

Through this research, AllerGen aims to increase the profile of children's environmental health and highlight the need for increased attention to research, policy and action in this area.

In addition, AllerGen is supporting the *BEAM Project*, which is developing indoor air samplers that will help quantify exposures and understand how dangerous chemical compounds get from products to people and into the environment.

The CHILD Study has collected and stored thousands of dust samples from homes across Canada and has the potential to generate important Canadian data on the levels of these compounds in homes as well as to study their impact on human health.

Today, over 50% of Canadian families are directly or indirectly affected by asthma and allergic diseases. Allergic diseases place tremendous psychosocial and economic burdens on both Canadians and the healthcare system, costing up to \$15 billion annually in emergency department visits, prescribed medications and productivity losses at school and work. Individuals with allergic asthma respond differently to exposure to allergens such as pollen, mites, or molds. While some develop an isolated "early" (resolving quickly) response, others go on to develop a "late" (*i.e.*, ongoing and more severe) response, the latter characterized by severe inflammation of the airways that can only be partly reversed by existing drugs.

ABOUT ALLERGEN NCE

AllerGen NCE Inc., the Allergy, Genes and Environment Network, is a national research network dedicated to improving the quality of life for people living with 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. Since inception in 2004, AllerGen has been supporting excellence in research and fostering commercialization, social innovation and knowledge mobilization that will enable Canadians to better prevent, treat and manage allergy, asthma, anaphylaxis and related immune diseases. Leading Canadian experts are working in trans-disciplinary teams, with national and international collaborators, and stakeholder and research partner organizations, to address knowledge gaps and create new opportunities in diagnostics, therapeutics, healthcare, public health, ethics, policy and patient education. Network participants are also training the next generation of researchers, innovators and clinician-scientists, while collaboratively working to reduce the morbidity, mortality and socio-economic impacts of allergic diseases. For more information, visit www.allergen-nce.ca.

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