AllerGen soars at first annual conference

AllerGen’s First Annual Research Conference: Innovation from Cell to Society connected more than 120 delegates with an interest in allergic and immune disease research in Toronto, October 26 to 28, 2005.

This two-day event marked the public unveiling of the Network’s research program, while underscoring the worldwide need to mobilize science, industry and government against the allergic and immune disease epidemic.

"The conference attracted some of Canada’s leading researchers and clinicians in the field, both from within and outside the Network, as well as representatives from key advocacy groups and industry," said Dr. Judah Denburg, AllerGen’s Scientific Director. "By holding our annual meeting early in AllerGen’s first year, we were able to build on the momentum we’ve generated since launching seven months ago and meet face-to-face with Network participants, trainees, research partners and individuals and organizations interested in participating in the Network."

Key highlights of Innovation from Cell to Society included:

- A keynote address on the urgent need for global research programs in allergy and asthma by Dr. Jean Bousquet, Professor of Respiratory Medicine at the University of Montpellier in Montpellier, France, and Director of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Collaborating Center for Asthma and the WHO Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases (GARD).

Three key players in the fight against the growing allergy epidemic in Canada have joined forces to increase the capacity of Canadian science to fight costly allergic and immune diseases.

AllerGen, Bayer Inc. and the Canadian Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Foundation (CAAIF) have created a two-year, $110,000 AllerGen/BAYER/CAAIF Immunodeficiency and Immunomodulation of Allergic Inflammation Clinician-Scientist Research Fellowship to encourage an increasing number of clinicians to train as scientists in the field of allergy.

Canada is currently experiencing nation-wide shortages and major distribution disparities of certified allergists/immunologists, clinician-scientists and allergy-related health professionals.

“All three sponsor organizations have made a commitment to support the development of highly qualified Canadian personnel in allergic and immune disease research and innovation,” said AllerGen Scientific Director and CEO, Dr. Judah Denburg. "The creation of this fellowship is one step towards our common goal – to improve the quality of life for Canadians who suffer from these diseases by getting more clinician-scientists trained in this field.”

One of AllerGen’s key objectives is to double the number of clinical and research trainees produced in Canada each year, while increasing the country’s capacity to train allergic-immune disease specialists by 25% per year.

"Partnerships are key to fulfilling these objectives," Dr. Denburg continued. "By leveraging our investments in strategic training initiatives and aligning our program with existing resources, we can have a significant, positive impact on the allergic disease problem in Canada.”

Applications for the Fellowship are available for download at www.allergen-nce.ca
As Innovation from Cell to Society demonstrated, Networks are all about people.

Pictured from top left: #1: Dr. Judah Denburg welcomes delegates with an introduction to AllerGen during the opening ceremonies; #2: Networking expert Dr. H. Brinton Milward, Associate Dean and Director of the School of Public Administration and Policy at The University of Arizona’s Eller College of Management, presents his insights on the value of networking during a gala dinner address; #3: (l to r) Dr. Jeff Brook, Air Quality Research Branch, Environment Canada and AllerGen RMC member, AllerGen Theme II Leader Dr. Malcolm Sears and RMC member Dr. Allan Becker discuss the days events; #4: Dr. Simon Pimstone, founder, Director, and President & Chief Executive Officer at Xenon Pharmaceuticals Inc. and AllerGen Board of Directors (BOD) member, discusses the business of research and the biotech/venture capital environment in Canada; #5: (l to r) Dr. Aubrey Tingle, AllerGen BOD member and Director, Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, Jacques Moisan, Best Trainee Oral Presentation winner, McGill University, Dr. Judah Denburg, Scientific Director and CEO of AllerGen and Dr. Kent HayGlass, Professor and Head, Department of Immunology at the University of Manitoba and Chair, AllerGen Advanced Education and Training Opportunities Advisory Committee (AETOAC); #6: Second and third from left, Best Trainee Poster Competition winners Johanna Roa and Farah Bandukwala (co-winners), McMaster University; #7: An insightful panel discussion on Commercialization and Venture Capital – Preparation for Partnerships: Strategies for Success, Chaired by Dr. Doug Barber of the AllerGen BOD and Director, Gennum Corporation (not pictured), featuring (l to r) Dr. Kevin Fehr, Director, Basic Research and Genetics, GlaxoSmithKline Inc. and member, AllerGen BOD, Dr. Paolo Renzi, Founder and CEO of Topigen Pharmaceuticals Inc., Dr. David Shindler, Director, Milestone Medica Corporation and member of AllerGen’s Research Management Committee (RMC) and Dr. Brian Underdown, President and CEO, University Medical Discoveries Inc. and member of AllerGen’s RMC.
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In the press...

Theme III researcher **Dr. Susan Waserman** was interviewed in the January, 2006 issue of *Canadian Living* magazine for an article on sesame allergy.

*Chatelaine* magazine’s December, 2005 issue contains comments from AllerGen’s Scientific Director, **Dr. Judah Denburg**, within a story on adult allergies.


Theme I Leader **Dr. Tom Hudson** of McGill University was featured in a *Globe and Mail* cover story on October 26th, 2005 about the completion of the Haplotype Map, the first catalogue of common genetic differences between four of the world’s ethnic groups.

Network news...

- AllerGen is pleased to announce two new appointments to its Board of Directors. Dr. Eric Leith, Chair of the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, was appointed to the Board for a 3-year term. Dr. Redwan Moqbel, AllerGen Theme III Alternate Leader and Professor and Director, Pulmonary Research Group at the University of Alberta, was elected to the Board by AllerGen researchers for a one-year term.

- In September, 2005, AllerGen Board of Directors member and world renowned Hepatitis B researcher Dr. Lorne Tyrrell won the $100,000 EnCana Principal Award, one of Canada’s biggest prizes, for his work on the first oral antiviral agent licensed to treat Hepatitis B.

- AllerGen Scientific Director and CEO Dr. Judah Denburg traveled to the Netherlands on November 15, 2005 as part of the Canadian contingent for Canada Business Day. The event, organized by the Canadian Embassy in the Netherlands, was designed to raise awareness among the Dutch business community of Canada’s potential as the “gateway to North America.” Dr. Denburg’s talk focused on leveraging public and private partnerships for success in the biotech sector.

- AllerGen was well represented at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program, held December 5 to 7, 2005 in Quebec City, PQ. Board of Directors member Dr. Claude Roy, Scientific Director Dr. Judah Denburg, Managing Director Dr. Diana Royce and Communications Manager Brad Hussey spent three days networking with their peers from the other NCEs, sharing best practices and identifying future challenges and opportunities within the program.

AllerGen across Canada... and the world

**By the numbers** – After only 8 months in existence, AllerGen is rapidly increasing its scope and reach across Canada and around the world. As of December 12, 2005, Network membership embraced 27 Principal Investigators, 114 Co-investigators, 40 Research Collaborators/Associates, 87 research trainees, 21 academic disciplines, 5 global foci (Canada, USA, Australia, UK, EU), 7 Canadian provinces, 20 academic institutions, 23 institutes/centres, and 63 research partners.