

AllerGen Trainee Symposium - A decade of value-added training and networking

Ten years after its first symposium, AllerGen welcomed 54 trainees, research staff and members of the AllerGen Students and New Professionals Network (ASNPN) back to Toronto for the 10th Annual AllerGen Trainee Symposium, April 29 to May 1, 2015.

This annual symposium aims to provide Network trainees and ASNPN members with unique value-added professional development opportunities that complement their academic and scientific training. The focus of this year's event was "careers outside of academia."

"A unique aspect of the AllerGen network is the cross-disciplinary mentoring and value-added capacity building it provides to trainees and young professionals. Over half of this year's participants were attending the Symposium for the first time, while others, such as Michelle North (Queen's University) and Jennifer Protudjer (Karolinska Institute), have been attending these events since the first one in 2006," states Diana Royce, AllerGen's Managing Director.

The 2015 Symposium included workshops on *The Business Side of Science*, *Success After Graduate School*, *Social Media & Communicating Your Science*, as well as a special presentation by Dr. Jane Aubin, Chief Scientific Officer and Vice-President, Research, Knowledge Translation and Ethics Portfolio, at the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. In addition, a career panel, moderated by former AllerGen trainee Dr. Marie-Josée Martel, Director of Scientific Client Strategies at Xcenda L.C.C., featured representatives from the Ontario Genomics Institute, Public Health Ontario and Parkdale Community Health Centre.

A highlight of the three-day symposium was a personality assessment workshop offered by Colleen Clarke, a well-regarded career specialist, corporate trainer, and public speaker in the areas of career management and transition, communication and networking.

"Colleen's presentation was energetic and informative. The trainees learned a lot about themselves and the people with whom they work," says HQP Coordinator Michelle Harkness.

The most valuable components of the Trainee Symposium, as highlighted in the post-event evaluations, were the opportunity to network and the career coaching provided by former AllerGen trainees.

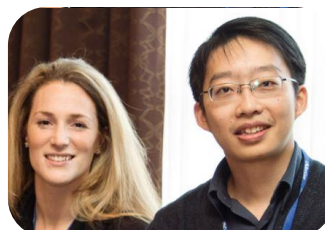
[View speakers' presentations.](#)



Dr. Diana Royce (left), AllerGen's Managing Director, and **Leah Shaver** (right), ASNPN Events Director, pictured with *The Business Side of Science* speaker, **Dr. David Kideckel**, Vice-President International Business Development, OtoSim Inc.

10th Annual AllerGen Trainee Symposium

Snapshots



Shout Outs

"The Symposium provided a unique opportunity for career development. I have not previously had the chance to formally learn about soft skills or to network with other individuals participating in allergy research. The Symposium has filled a significant gap in my formal training that will enable me to be a more effective and successful researcher."

"As a student new to the Network, I was astounded by the usefulness of the Symposium. Networking opportunities with my peers and veteran investigators were plentiful and meaningful."

"I absolutely loved the Networking Dinner and Career Panels. The guests were very happy to give advice, some of which is hard to come by at times. These events have definitely shaped my career outlook and I will always be grateful to AllerGen for hosting these wonderful symposiums."

HQP Video Competition awards two \$1000 prizes

The AllerGen HQP Video Competition, launched January 5, 2015, challenged ASNPN members to create short videos highlighting the relevance, meaning, and implications of their allergic disease research in a manner that would be understandable, interesting and engaging to a non-scientific audience.

Videos were evaluated by a panel of experts, whose scores accounted for 80% of the ranking. Online voting, measured by "likes" on YouTube, accounted for the remaining 20% of the total score.



Congratulations to the winners: **David Ngan** (*Asthma and H1N1 Swine Flu*) from The University of British Columbia and co-creators **Rishma Chooniedass** and **Saiful Huq** (*Epinephrine 4 Life*) from the University of Manitoba. A \$1000 cash prize will be awarded to each of the winning videos.

"It was great to get a glimpse of the many interesting projects around Canada. Thank you to AllerGen for highlighting KT and its importance in research," stated Chooniedass and Huq. "We hope AllerGen holds similar competitions in the future."

"It's rewarding to realize you've gained a far larger reach than you could through traditional scientific avenues," observed Ngan. "Being able to attract and captivate an audience for three minutes in today's media-saturated society is no small feat."

Enthusiasm for this knowledge translation initiative permeated throughout the Network. AllerGen thanks all those who submitted a video to the competition, the members of the judging panel for their time and effort, and everyone who voted online for their favourite video. These videos will continue to be featured on AllerGen's YouTube channel and will be showcased on AllerGen's website and through social media.

Winning videos:

Rishma Chooniedass & Saiful Huq: [Epinephrine 4 Life](#)
University of Manitoba

Epinephrine is the primary medical treatment recommended for an anaphylactic reaction. Despite this, reactions are still often inappropriately managed. Findings from the study featured in this video will facilitate the design of more effective strategies to promote the appropriate and timely use of epinephrine.



David Ngan: [Asthma and H1N1 Swine Flu](#)
The University of British Columbia

A disproportionately high percentage of patients who were hospitalized or who died during the 2009 H1N1 pandemic were young asthmatics. Little is known about how the asthmatic airway epithelium responds to pandemic H1N1 viral infection. Using a murine model of allergic airway disease, the study featured in this video determined the impact of acute pH1N1 infection on overall health.

The **HQP Video Competition 2015** playlist of videos can be viewed on AllerGen's YouTube channel.

AllerGen invests in undergraduate research



2014 award recipient Britt Voaklander with supervisor Dr. Brian Rowe, University of Alberta

AllerGen's investment in the next generation of allergic disease researchers and clinician-scientists begins at the undergraduate level. Annually, AllerGen awards 10 summer studentships to undergraduate students. The training and mentorship provided is intended to foster interest in allergic and related immune disease research by recruiting the top undergraduate students to work with established AllerGen research teams.

Awards are a combination of AllerGen funding and matching partner (non-AllerGen) funding, for a total award value of \$6000.

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2015 AllerGen undergraduate research awards!

2015 AllerGen Undergraduate Summer Studentships

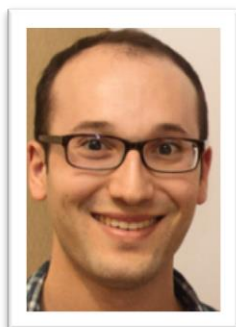
Name	Institution	Supervisor	Research Topic
Anne-Marie Boucher-Lafleur	UQAC	Catherine Laprise	Protein quantification of interleukin 1 family members in whole blood samples and bronchial epithelial cells in asthma
Deborah Chan	University of Manitoba	Meghan Azad	Intrapartum antibiotic use and breastfeeding success in the Canadian Healthy Infant Longitudinal Development (CHILD) Study
Jasmine Cheng	The University of British Columbia	Stuart Turvey	The impact of the intestinal microbiota on human immune development and atopic disease
Michael Chen	McGill University	James Martin	Oxidative stress mediates organic dust induced airway hyperresponsiveness and airway remodeling
Raymond Chen	McMaster University	Judah Denburg	The effects of a single nucleotide polymorphism rs18372353 on nasal epithelial-derived thymic stromal lymphopoietin and peripheral blood CD34+ cell eosinophil/basophil lineage commitment
Miriam Larouche	UQAC	Catherine Laprise	Methylation study of selected genes involved in the inflammatory process in asthma
Eric Lu	The University of British Columbia	Peter Paré	Elucidation of smoothelin function in airway smooth muscle
Maxwell Tran	McMaster University	Malcolm Sears	Child diet in relation to persistent food sensitization at 3 years in a Canadian Longitudinal Birth Cohort Study
Mark Tenn	McMaster University	Susan Waserman/ Mark Larché	Peptide immunotherapy for prevention of peanut sensitization in a murine model
Keith Tam	McMaster University	Sonia Anand	Prenatal and early-life determinants for 1-year infant allergy and atopic diseases in a multi-ethnic prospective birth cohort

International Trainee Research Visit Program

Through a competitive process, AllerGen's **International Trainee Research Visit Program** funds graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to spend from six weeks to six months outside of Canada with international investigators and their research teams. Research visits must advance the objectives and intended outcomes of an AllerGen research project.

The next application deadline is September 15, 2015. Interested trainees are required to provide a letter of intent to AllerGen's HQP and Events Coordinator, Michelle Harkness, as the first step in the application process. For more information please [CLICK HERE](#).

Recent International Research Visit award recipients:



Matt Gold

The University of British Columbia

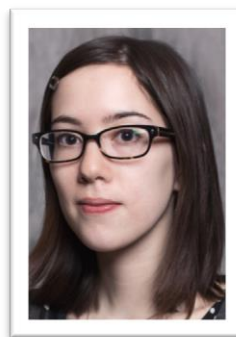
Supervisor: Dr. Kelly McNagny

Host Institution:

VIB Inflammation Research Centre, University of Ghent, Belgium

Host Supervisor:

Dr. Bart Lambrecht



Laura Feldman

The Hospital for Sick Children

Supervisor: Dr. Teresa To

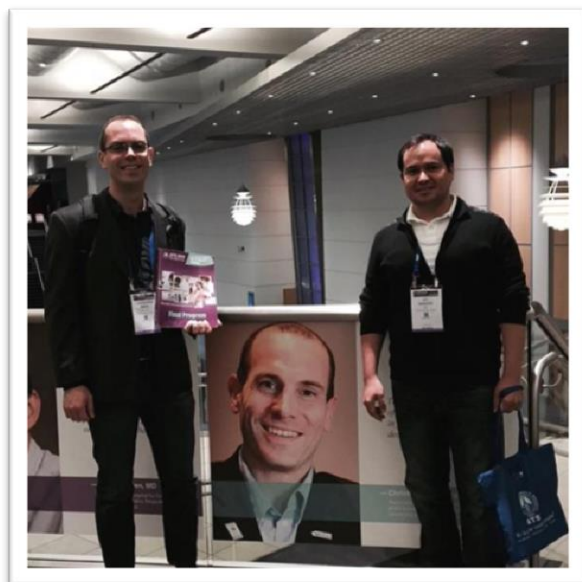
Host Institution:

Unit of Environmental Epidemiology, Institute of Environmental Medicine
Karolinska Institute, Sweden

Host Supervisor:

Anna Bergström

Carlsten pollution lab "front and centre" at ATS



Members of Dr. Chris Carlsten's lab: Dr. Chris Rider (left), PDF, and M.Sc. student Ali Hosseini (right)



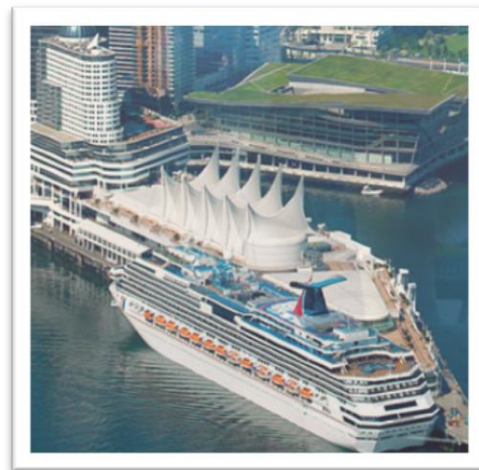
2015 AllerGen Poster Competition

Call for Abstracts

The 2015 AllerGen Poster Competition will take place during the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (CSACI) Annual Scientific Meeting to be held in Vancouver, BC, from October 21–24, 2015.

The AllerGen Poster Competition is open to AllerGen trainees, research staff and new professionals who have worked on, or are working on, AllerGen-funded research projects during the period 2012–2016. Abstracts on ancillary research that connects to an AllerGen-funded project are also acceptable. ASNPN trainees not working on an AllerGen-funded project are eligible to submit an abstract to the [CSACI Poster Competition](#) and apply for an AllerGen Travel Award.

The focus of the competition is the presentation of research findings. Translational research results relevant to clinical application and knowledge mobilization aimed at patient education, policy innovation and/or technology or market development are strongly encouraged.



Apply

Submission Deadline – Friday, June 26, 2015

If you have questions related to the *Call for Abstracts* or participation in the CSACI Poster Competition, please contact Michelle Harkness at michelleharkness@allergen-nce.ca.

2015–2016 ASNPN Executive Committee

Call for Nominations: (Term of Office: July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016)

In 2007, AllerGen launched the AllerGen Student and New Professionals Network (ASNPN) to foster networking and knowledge exchange among AllerGen trainees, and to promote professional excellence and ongoing skill development. An elected ASNPN Executive Committee acts in an advisory capacity to the AllerGen Advanced Education and Training Opportunities Committee (AETOAC), providing strategic advice on AllerGen HQP program priorities and tactics.

Nominations for the 2015–2016 ASNPN Leadership Committee are currently being accepted. ASNPN members are invited to nominate candidates for the following ASNPN Executive Committee positions:

- President
- Vice-President
- Communications Director
- Events Director
- Regional Director - Quebec/Atlantic
- Regional Director - Ontario
- Regional Director - Central (AB, SK, MB)
- Regional Director - Pacific (BC)
- Member-at-Large (2)

Deadline for nominations: Friday, May 29, 2015

For more information, please contact:

Michelle Harkness

Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP) and Events Coordinator
905.525.9140 ext. 26633

michelleharkness@allergen-nce.ca

AllerGen welcomes new ASNPN members

Trainees and new professionals working on AllerGen-funded research automatically become ASNPN members. Students and new professionals not directly involved in AllerGen research, but training or working in the field of allergy, asthma and/or anaphylaxis, may apply for membership.

New members approved for ASNPN membership since December 2014:

- **Dhaifallah Alotaibi**, M.Sc. (c), University of Alberta; Supervisor: Harissios Vliagoftis
- **Catherine Biggs**, MD, Clinical Fellow-in-training in Allergy and Immunology, Boston Children's Hospital
- **Yahya Fiteih**, PhD (c), University of Alberta; Supervisor: Harissios Vliagoftis
- **Miranda Kirby**, PDF, The University of British Columbia; Supervisor: Harvey Coxsen
- **Austin Laing**, M.Sc. (c), University of Calgary; Supervisor: Margaret Kelly
- **Thomas Mahood**, PhD (c), University of Manitoba; Supervisor: Andrew Halayko
- **James Murphy**, BSc (c), University of Calgary; Supervisor: David Proud

Join Us!



ASNPN Executive Committee (2014 - 2015)

Lianne Soller, PhD, ASNPN President; McGill University

Pia-Lauren Reece, PhD, ASNPN Vice-President; Sim & McBurney IP

Leah Shaver, M.Sc. (c), Events Director; University of Waterloo

Mena Soliman, M.Sc. (c), Communications Director; Queen's University

Amrit Singh, PhD (c), Pacific Director (BC); The University of British Columbia

Vivek Gandhi, PhD (c), Central Director (AB, SK, MB); University of Alberta

Elizabeth Simms, MD/PhD (c), Ontario Director; McMaster University

Stephanie Nairn, PhD (c), Québec/Atlantic Director; McGill University

Carlo de Olim Rugginenti, M.Sc., Member-at-Large; Université de Montréal

Laura Feldman, M.Sc. (c), Member-at-Large; University of Toronto

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COMMITTEE
BIOS**