

## For immediate release

### Over half of Canadian alternative medicine clinics offer unproven allergy/asthma services, new AllerGen study finds

**HAMILTON, ON (20 December 2016)** The majority of Canadian chiropractic, naturopathic, homeopathic and acupuncture clinics claim that they can either diagnose or treat both allergy/sensitivity and asthma, according to an AllerGen study of nearly 400 clinic websites.

The research, published December 17, 2016, in [BMJ Open](#), analyzed the frequency and content of marketing claims made by complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) providers in the 10 most populous cities across the country.

More than 50% of the CAM clinics advertised at least one health-related claim for both allergy/sensitivity and asthma. Naturopath clinic websites had the highest rate of health claims for both allergy and asthma: 85% claimed one of diagnosis, treatment or treatment efficacy for allergic conditions, and 64% made at least one such claim for asthma.

AllerGen investigator [Timothy Caulfield](#), a law professor at the University of Alberta and a well-known expert in health and science policy issues, led the research.

“We found that alternative medicine practitioners offer a wide-range of tests and treatments—everything from immunotherapy and intravenous hydrogen peroxide to ionic footbath detoxification—for allergy and asthma,” says Professor Caulfield, who is a Canada Research Chair in Health Law and Policy. “These interventions are presented to the public as legitimate; however, for the most part they are not based in science and lack any substantial evidence of efficacy.”

For example, food-specific immunoglobulin G (IgG) testing was commonly advertised, despite the fact that the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology has recommended not to use this test due to the absence of a body of research supporting it.

AllerGen Highly Qualified Personnel Blake Murdoch was a study co-author. “We found 27 examples of tests and treatments offered by chiropractors, naturopaths, homeopaths and acupuncturists for allergy and asthma,” Murdoch says. “We believe it is reasonable to assume that the number of CAM providers actually administering such procedures surpasses the number we identified online, since some clinic websites were relatively simple and did not specify the services they provided.”

The study’s results suggest the need for a legal and policy response in order to protect the Canadian public from questionable claims, according to Professor Caulfield. “Several of the proposed treatments are potentially harmful,” he says. “It is certainly in the public interest to better understand these claims and to develop a legal framework that prevents the potential harm and financial exploitation of Canadians.”

### About AllerGen NCE Inc.

[AllerGen NCE Inc.](#), the Allergy, Genes and Environment Network (est. 2004), is a national research network dedicated to improving the quality of life of people suffering from allergic and

related immune diseases. Funded through the federal Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program, the Network is hosted at McMaster University in Hamilton. -

- 30 -

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