

Toward a National Food Allergy Strategy for Canada

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Research Context

AllerGen: Allergy, Genes and Environment Network
• NCE launched in 2005 at McMaster University

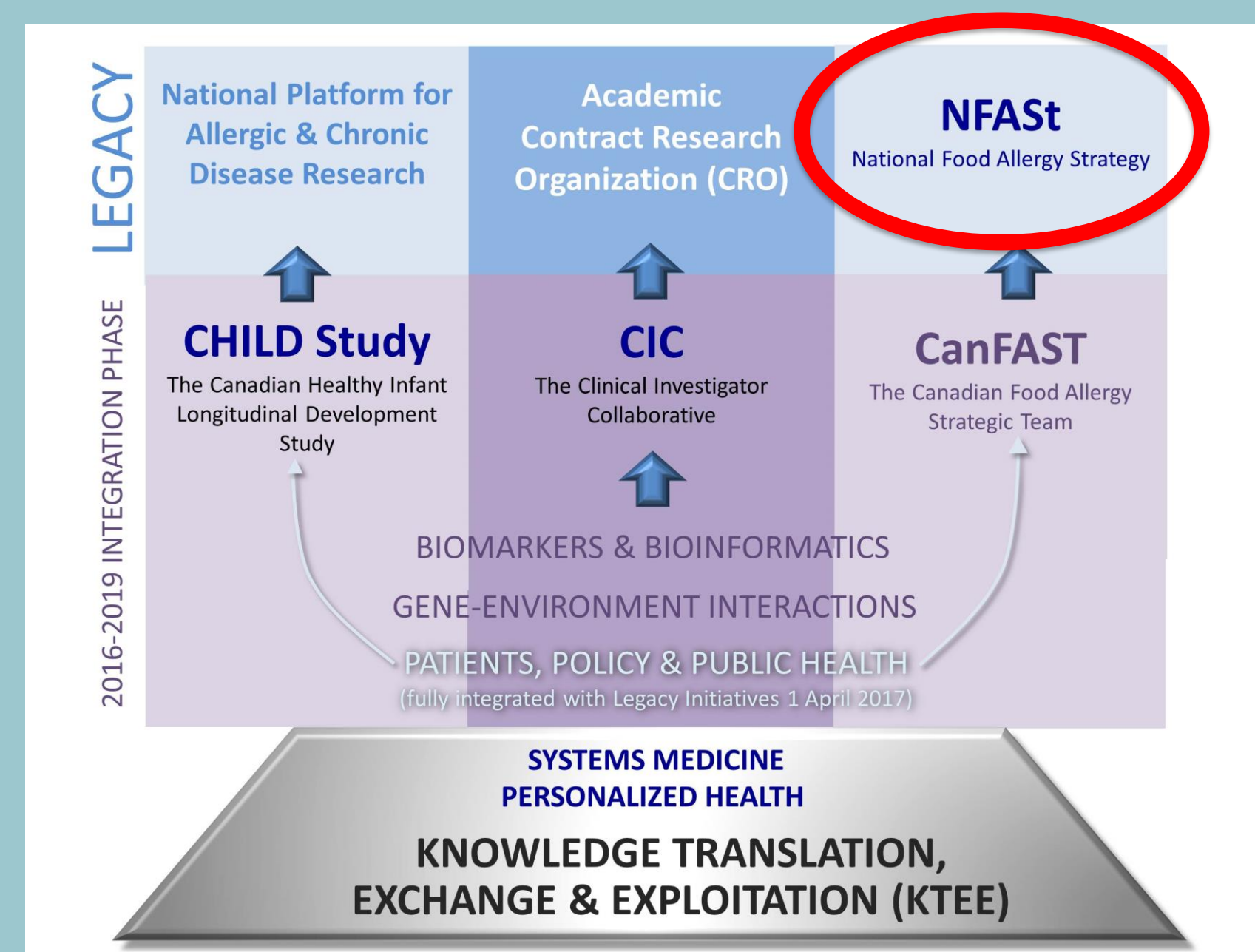
Vision

Reduce the morbidity, mortality, and socioeconomic burden of allergy, asthma, and anaphylaxis

Mission

Create an enduring network to reduce the impact of allergic and related immune disease

As AllerGen continues to make tremendous strides in basic research re: causes and consequences of food allergy, the NFASt team – in broad consultation – has begun the process of developing a **National Food Allergy Strategy for Canada**



What we know

- 7.5% of Canadians report having a food allergy
- 50% of Canadian households are affected by food allergy
- The “Top 10” food allergens affecting Canadian children and adults
- How food allergy is experienced among school children
- Anaphylaxis rates doubled in Canadian children between 2011-2015
- Early food introduction reduces allergic sensitization

What we don't know

- **Is food allergy increasing in Canada?**
- **What are the economic costs of food allergies?**
- **What is the impact of the common use of “may contain” precautionary allergen warnings on food packaging?**
- **What are the legal/human rights of students with food allergies?**
- **What are the experiences of university/college students with food allergies?**

Objectives of a National Food Allergy Strategy (NFASt)

- Determine whether the prevalence of food allergy is rising in Canada
- Measure the economic costs (direct and indirect) of food allergies
- Develop an evidence-based national approach to food allergen management
- Provide a legal opinion on whether or not food allergy is a disability in Canada
- Explore the experiences of Canadian university/college students with food allergies

How to Achieve

4 PRONGED STRATEGY

1. Learn from others (e.g. Australia)
2. Continue to mobilize the knowledge created within CANFAST (the Canadian Food Allergy Strategic Team) and other parts of AllerGen (e.g. CHILD)
3. Begin to fill existing gaps with the creation of new knowledge
4. Create new dissemination tools

Projects Underway

Research

- Exploring the rising prevalence of food allergy (Clarke/Elliott)
- Economic costs of food allergy (Clarke)
- Food allergen management in the Canadian context (Godefroy)
- Post-secondary experience, practice, policy (Ellis)

Knowledge Dissemination

- White Paper: Is food allergy a disability? (Caulfield)
- Expert guidelines on managing food allergies in schools (Waserman)
- Food allergies and human rights (Caulfield)
- Making sense of allergies in the Canadian context (Elliott)

NFASt Partners



Conclusions

- Do we have all the answers? **NO**
- Do we have enough information to begin to make some good strong policy recommendations? **YES**
- We do not have to wait to have all the answers about food allergy before we start intervening to **maximize choice** and **minimize risk** for affected Canadians

NFASt priorities:

- Food labelling and food allergen management
- Oral food challenge
- School settings (post-secondary) - policies/guidelines
- Access to specialist care
- Economic impacts
- Knowledge dissemination
- Research on knowledge gaps in the health professions
- Cognitive - behavioural interventions

NEXT STEPS

- Keep our stakeholders meaningfully involved
- Develop a prototype for Canada
- Take it global