

AllerGen, the newest addition to the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) program, has been operational for only two months, but already it has made significant progress towards mobilizing the fight against allergic and immune disease. The NCE program is a joint initiative of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Industry Canada.



## Keen interest in inaugural competition nets talent, vision

After pouring through 88 Letters of Intent, 38 full proposal submissions and an intensive adjudication process, AllerGen is out of the gate with an innovative, forward-thinking research program.

In all, 27 proposals have been accepted across the Network's five research themes. The projects represent a wide sampling of the Canadian scientific community's interest in the escalating epidemic of allergic disease.

More than 100 researchers at over 20 universities and research facilities across

Canada and in other parts of the world will ultimately join forces under the AllerGen banner.

"This is an exciting first step in actualizing the idea of being the world's largest allergy research consortium," says AllerGen Scientific Director, Dr. Judah Denburg. "We have attracted Canada's most talented scientists and clinicians with expertise in allergy and asthma research."

AllerGen's projects deemed eligible for funding are listed at [www.allergen-nce.com](http://www.allergen-nce.com).

## Research program packs powerful potential

We use the word 'epidemic' to describe the breadth of the allergy problem in Canada and other developed nations. According to Health Canada, non-food allergies are the most common chronic condition in Canadians who are 12 years of age and older. Canadian data estimate that allergies cost Canada \$15 billion each year. One out of three Canadians — roughly equivalent to the population of Ontario — suffer to some degree from allergy, coping with effects running the gamut from the inconvenient and uncomfortable to the potentially fatal.

Decreasing the burden of these conditions is the core mission of AllerGen and

its nation-wide contingent of leading researchers and clinicians. Together, they have developed a powerful response to the asthma and allergy problem.

"The impact that AllerGen's research will generate in the fight against these diseases will be tremendous," says Dr. Judah Denburg, the Network's CEO and scientific director. "We have set aggressive, measurable outcomes that will lead to demonstrable improvements in understanding, identifying, treating and even preventing allergic and immune disease."

Key research outcomes will be:

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## Scientific director has first word at AllergyExpo

Canada's first public and professional forum focusing on allergies kicked off with a keynote address by AllerGen Scientific Director Dr. Judah Denburg.

AllergyExpo ran at the National Trade Centre in Toronto from May 13th to 15th, 2005, featuring a one-day professional forum and a two-day public exposition on a range of topics related to asthma, allergies and food intolerances.

In his address to an audience, largely comprised of allied health professionals, Dr. Denburg outlined the scope of the allergy epidemic while highlighting AllerGen's contributions to much-needed collaboration among many disciplines and sectors to make a difference in the fight against allergic disease.

## In the News ...

Dr. Denburg was recently interviewed about the Hygiene Hypothesis and the allergy epidemic on Radio Canada International. To listen to the interview go to [www.rcinet.ca/rci/en/emissions/1441.shtml](http://www.rcinet.ca/rci/en/emissions/1441.shtml).



**AllerGen's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Research Conference: *Innovation from Cell to Society***  
**October 27-28, 2005**  
**Sheraton Gateway Hotel,**  
**Toronto, ON**

If you have an interest in allergic and immune disease and related research, you won't want to miss a minute of AllerGen's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Research Conference. Details on registration and travel and a preliminary program will be available soon at [www.allergen-nce.com](http://www.allergen-nce.com)— reserve these dates now!

*This event is open to the public.*

**1<sup>st</sup> Annual Network Research Workshop,**  
**September 20-21, 2005**  
**Winnipeg Convention Centre,**  
**Winnipeg, MN**

No network can truly come together with a common purpose without face-to-face meetings — and as such, AllerGen Principal Investigators and their trainees have been invited to attend our first Network-wide research workshop. Members of the Research Management Committee are also invited. *This event is by invitation only.*

The event will allow Network investigators and students to meet for the first time as a Network to discuss: AllerGen's strategic objectives, the Network Research Program and Theme-based research goals; IP and knowledge translation issues; individual projects, including the relationship of project outcomes to Network Goals; research strengths and and research gaps; and the student training program strategy and proposed operational plan.

**Sponsorship opportunities are still available...**

Unique partnering opportunities with AllerGen are available in the form of sponsorships of our Annual Research Conference. For more information on how your organization can get involved, contact AllerGen Managing Director Dr. Diana Royce at 905-525-9140, ext. 26502.

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- The development of the first large-scale birth cohort in allergy in Canada to study the interaction of genetics and the environment on the development of allergic disease. "This is the centrepiece of AllerGen's research," Dr. Denburg explains. "We will study families from before the children are conceived to get a clear picture of the roots and the progression of allergy. By understanding what genetic variations in various populations cause allergic reactions in response to particular environmental stimuli, we will be better able to test for, prevent and treat allergies. The data collected through the cohort will be of enormous value to the health of Canadians."
- Better access to care: Canadians are underserved when it comes to access to medical care for allergic diseases. AllerGen will create 100 new research trainee positions, and double the number of highly qualified clinical specialists and researchers in the field.
- New drugs, novel therapies, new and better tests and more effective public policy. Working with partners across the public, private and academic sectors, AllerGen will focus the efforts of the Canadian medical and scientific communities towards creating more efficient and effective ways to detect and treat asthma and allergy.

"Research initially funded by AllerGen comprises projects that will create a strong research foundation on which to build the Network," Dr. Denburg continues. "As we become a real working network and integrate our people with our approach, we will see these projects and new ones merge into larger, more complex endeavors. Right now, we have the people, the potential and the plan — this is the first real step towards realizing a healthier Canada in terms of reducing the impact of asthma and allergy."

## Network news

Two members of AllerGen's Board of Directors were recently recognized for achievement in their fields. Dr. Simon Pimstone has been named to Canada's Top 40 Under 40, an award that honours Canadians who have reached a significant level of success but have not yet reached the age of 40. Dr. Pimstone is President and CEO of Xenon Pharmaceuticals Inc., a clinical genetics-based drug discovery and development company headquartered in Burnaby, B.C.



Dr. Douglas Barber was honoured by McMaster University's Faculty of Engineering at its annual *Applause and Accolades* gala in May. The awards recognize those who have made an outstanding contribution to engineering, the university and the community. Dr. Barber is the co-founder of Gennum Corporation, a Burlington, ON-based high-tech firm that produces silicon integrated circuits (ICs), modules and thin-film hybrid microcircuit components for a variety of applications.

## AllerGen Fast Facts...

▲AllerGen brings together more than 100 researchers at over 20 universities and research facilities, and more than 70 Canadian and international partners representing education, government, health care, industry and research aspects of allergic/immune diseases.

▲AllerGen's educational program will address the alarming shortage of allergists and allergic disease researchers by creating 100 new research trainee positions, and doubling the number of highly qualified clinical specialists and research scientists currently working in Canada.