



GOVERNMENT OF CANADA HELPS BATTLE ALLERGIC DISEASES THROUGH INNOVATION

AllerGen Network of Centres of Excellence renewed for a second seven-year cycle



From left to right: Mr. Mike Wallace, Member of Parliament for Burlington; Dr. Judah Denburg, Scientific Director and CEO, AllerGen; the Honourable Gary Goodyear, Minister of State for Science and Technology; Dr. Diana Royce, Managing Director and COO, AllerGen; Lisa Drouillard, Deputy Director, Networks of Centres of Excellence and Dr. Patrick Deane, President and Vice-Chancellor, McMaster University.

Hamilton, March 23, 2012- A network of research experts from the academic, private and public sectors has received renewed federal funding to carry out its battle against allergic and related immune diseases. The Honourable Gary Goodyear, Minister of State for Science and Technology, today announced \$36.5 million to support the AllerGen Network of Centres of Excellence for

the coming seven years.

"How do we improve lives, create jobs and economic growth through Science and Technology? Innovation. We are investing in Networks of Centres of Excellence to improve the quality of life of Canadians, strengthen the economy and support job creation," said Minister Goodyear. "Because, as Canadians, we are not unique in the problems we face, we can sell our solutions to the world. AllerGen's research will help improve the lives of millions of Canadians suffering from the complications of allergic diseases through innovation."

The network's recent advances include improving asthma diagnosis and predicting attacks, unravelling the genetic connections to allergies and asthma, and revealing the impact of socio-economic factors on the development of the immune system.

"The AllerGen team features a highly talented and diverse group of researchers who tackle all aspects of this problem," said Suzanne Fortier, Chair of the NCE Steering Committee and President of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council. "In addition to finding underlying causes, developing new treatments and laying the groundwork for prevention strategies, their contribution includes expanding the number of highly trained people working in this area."

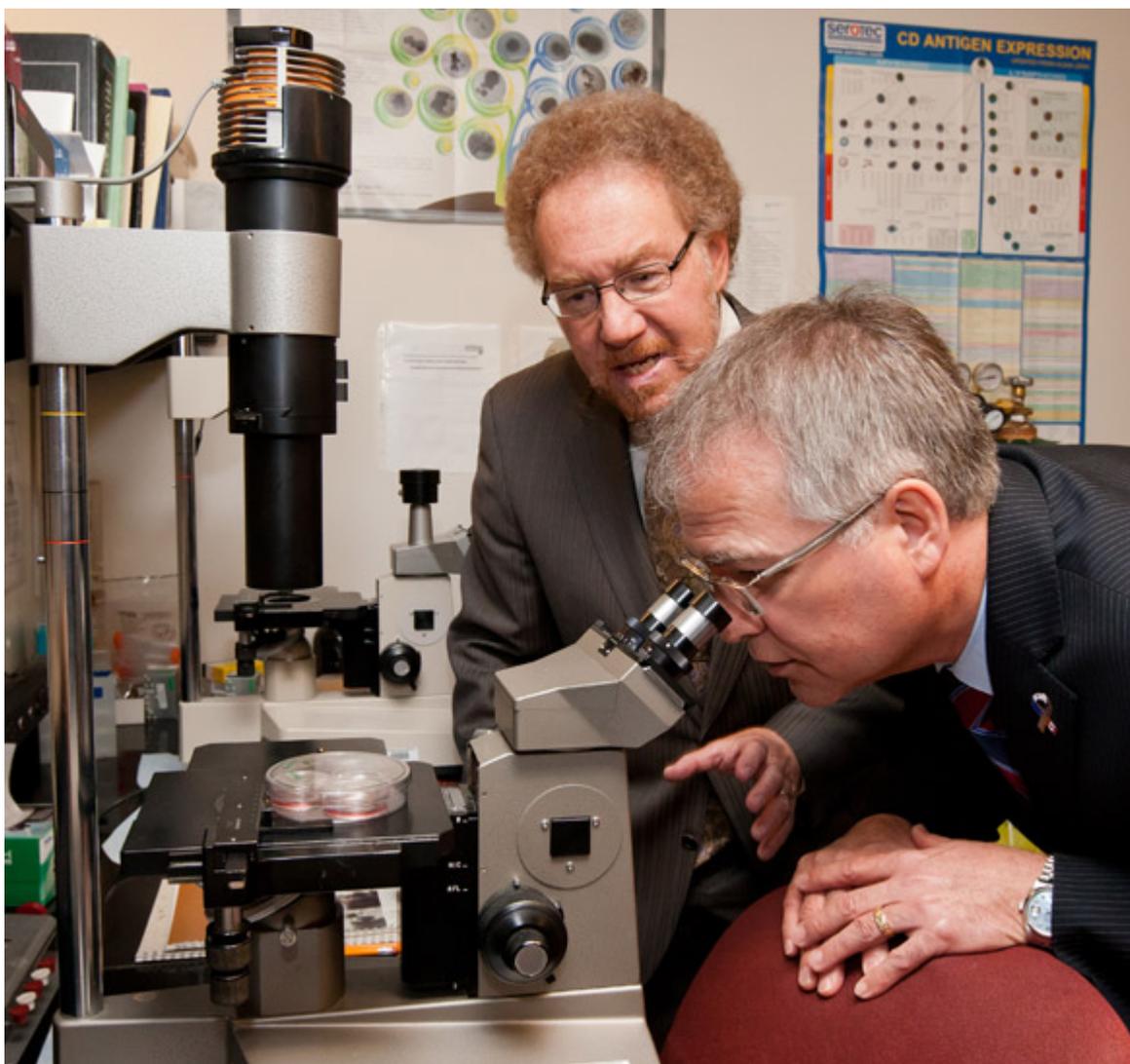
Judah Denburg, Scientific Director and CEO of AllerGen NCE added: "Over the next seven years, AllerGen aims to focus on commercialization and knowledge mobilization activities. AllerGen's research and development efforts will also create new "high value" jobs, prepare the next generation of researchers,

entrepreneurs and experts to fill them, and leave international legacies of socio-economic benefits and improved quality of life for individuals and their families living with allergies, asthma and anaphylaxis."

AllerGen, which stands for Allergy, Genes and Environment Network, consists of almost 200 researchers based at 23 universities and other organizations, with its headquarters at McMaster University. Its research focuses on three main areas: Gene-Environment Interactions; Diagnostics and Therapeutics; and Public Health, Ethics, Policy and Society.

First funded through the federal Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) program in 2004, AllerGen was renewed following a review process that determined it met the required levels of excellence in its scientific accomplishments, future research goals, and training and knowledge-transfer activities.

The NCE program is managed jointly by the three federal granting agencies-the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)-in partnership with Industry Canada.



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March 23, 2012; Hamilton, Ontario, Canada; The Honourable Gary Goodyear, Minister of State for Science and Technology views through a microscope during the lab tour with Dr. Judah Denburg, Scientific Director and CEO, AllerGen following the announcement of funding renewal for the AllerGen Network of Centres of Excellence.

Backgrounder

Renewal of AllerGen NCE

The Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) program supports large-scale collaborative research networks to mobilize Canada's best talent in the academic, private and public sectors to generate economic and social benefits for Canadians. Networks are funded based on their excellence in research, their inclusion of the best

cross-country talents, the extent of their partnerships with the receptor community, and their potential to generate socio-economic benefits.

The Allergy, Genes and Environment Network (AllerGen) has been funded since 2004 to catalyze and support discovery, development, networking, capacity building, commercialization and knowledge translation to reduce the burden of allergic and related immune diseases. Following the completion of its first seven-year mandate, it will receive renewed funding of \$36.5 million over the next seven years to continue its work. The renewal proposal, reviewed by an Expert Panel, the NCE Standing Selection Committee, and the NCE Steering Committee, was evaluated against the following five criteria:

- the excellence of the research program;
- the potential to develop highly qualified personnel;
- the ability to increase networking and partnerships;
- the potential for knowledge and technology exchange and exploitation; and
- the overall management of the Network.

Headquartered at McMaster University, AllerGen consists of almost 200 researchers based at 23 universities and other organizations across the country. AllerGen investigators combine basic and clinical science with social sciences to answer major questions surrounding allergic disease. The collaborations have led to new therapies, tools and medications to treat allergies, and to new policies and practices that will help to improve health outcomes for patients. AllerGen's research focusses on three broad areas:

- Gene-Environment Interactions
- Diagnostics and Therapeutics
- Public Health, Ethics, Policy and Society

More information on AllerGen can be found at www.allergen-nce.ca.

Founded in 1989, the Networks of Centres of Excellence are partnerships between universities, industry, government and not-for-profit organizations. An integral element of the Government of Canada's science and technology strategy, *Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage*, these nationwide, multidisciplinary and multi-sector partnerships connect excellent research with industrial know-how and strategic investment.

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An initiative of CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC



Faculty of Health Sciences

Minister announces renewed funding for AllerGen

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Minister **Gary Goodyear** studies a cord blood sample, along with AllerGen's scientific director and CEO **Judah Denburg** and research technician **Delia Heroux** in the Denburg Laboratory, as students **Sina Rusta Sallehy** and **Claudia Hui** look on. Goodyear announced \$36.5 million in renewed funding for AllerGen's work treating allergies.

[\[View slideshow\]](#)

The battle against **allergic and immune diseases** has received a \$36.5 million boost from the federal government.

Gary Goodyear, Minister of State for Science and Technology announced Friday at McMaster University that the renewed federal funding will flow, over the next seven years, to the [AllerGen Network of Centres of Excellence](#). The network, headquartered at McMaster, is made up of almost 200 researchers from 23 universities and organizations.

"These diseases cause a lot of suffering and create an immense economic burden," Goodyear said. "AllerGen NCE has already had a very positive impact on Canada's ability to understand and prevent these illnesses and to improve care for patients."

The funding will allow researchers to pin down underlying causes and develop new treatments and prevention methods for people living with allergies, asthma and anaphylaxis.

Judah Denburg, scientific director and chief executive officer (CEO) of AllerGen NCE and professor in the [Michael G. DeGroot School of Medicine](#), said his team will work in the next seven years to decrease the burden of allergic and immune disease on Canadian's productivity and economic growth and lead major Canadian innovation and commercialization.

"We will be recognized globally," he said.

The NCE program is managed by the [Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council \(NSERC\)](#), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), in partnership with Industry Canada.

Patrick Deane, McMaster's President & Vice-Chancellor, said it's an honour to be the host institution of AllerGen — a network which shares a similar philosophy on research.

"We're aligned in our thinking and approach to research through innovation and multidisciplinary collaborations," he said. "The blend of talent and expertise within AllerGen is second to none and their collective work will improve the health and well-being of many Canadians."

Goodyear added that AllerGen has already had notable successes with improving **asthma diagnosis and treatments**, unravelling the genetic connections to allergies and asthma and revealing the impact of environmental and socio-economic factors on the development of the human immune system.