Parental therapy preferences for children with food allergy

Ruchi Gupta1,2, Mary Siracusa1, Marjorie Yarbrough1, Bridget Smith1,3

1Center for Community Health, Northwestern University, Chicago IL, USA; 2Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago, Chicago IL, USA; 3Center for Innovation for Complex Chronic Healthcare (CINNCH) Edward J. Hines Jr. VA Hospital, Hines IL, USA

Aims: Pediatric food allergy is growing in prevalence, and a number of potential immunotherapies are being developed in an attempt to address this health issue. The objective of this study is to determine whether parents would choose to enroll their child in a food allergy immunotherapy, and to describe the factors influencing parents’ decisions to enroll their child in a therapy.

Methods: We developed a survey to determine parental perceptions on food allergy therapies. Cognitive interviews were conducted with parents of food-allergic children (n=6) to ensure that the survey was feasibility and comprehensibility. The survey was disseminated to parents of children with food allergies via social media from February 1 to May 31, 2016 (N=377 parents, 434 children). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze and report the attitudes and perceptions of parents when deciding to enroll their child in a food allergy therapy. Associations between parent and child characteristics and definite willingness to participate in a trial were tested using a multiple logistic regression model with an adjustment for clustering within families.

Results: Of the allergens reported, 74.9% of children were allergic to peanut and 64.5% were allergic to tree nut. Seventy-four percent of children had experienced a severe reaction in their lifetime. Among parents of food-allergic children, 51.6% reported that if food allergy therapies were made publicly available, they would enroll their child in a therapy. Conversely, 8.1% of participants reported that they would not enroll their child in a therapy and 37.1% responded “Maybe”.

A reported 53.5% of parents of peanut-allergic children would enroll their child in a clinical trial. Similarly, 51.1% of parents of tree nut-allergic children, 51.8% of parents of egg-allergic children, and 49.3% of parents of milk-allergic children would enroll their child in a clinical trial. After adjusting for income, severity, food type, race ethnicity, and age, parents with an income of $100,000 and over had higher odds of definitely participating in a clinical trial (OR=3.95, p=0.024). Parents of Hispanic children (0.32, p=0.019) and parents of children with a wheat allergy (0.44, p=0.026) had lower odds.

Conclusion: This study suggests that the majority of parents of food-allergic children are interested in enrolling their child in a food allergy therapy, with 51.6% definitely interested.