**Patient-perceived impact of food allergy in daily life**

Fabrícia Carolino, Luís Amaral, Alice Coimbra
Serviço de Imunoalergologia, Centro Hospitalar São João, E.P.E., Porto, Portugal

**Aims:** To assess the perceived impact in daily life of food allergy (FA) in our population.

**Methods:** A medical records review of all patients assessed in our Food Allergy Unit from 2013 to 2015 (n=187) was performed and those with confirmed FA after diagnostic work-up (n=51, 27.3%) were selected. These food-allergic patients or their caregivers were then interviewed by telephone; only 21 (41.2%) patients responded and these were included in the final analysis.

**Results:** A total of 21 food-allergic patients (66.7% females, mean±SD age 28.1±15.7 years; 7 aged under 18 years) were included. The main culprit food groups were crustacean (25.8%), fish (19.4%), fruits (19.4%), and tree nuts (16.1%); 9 patients were allergic to foods from more than one group. Reactions were immediate in 20 (95.2%) cases and 12 (57.1%) presented as anaphylaxis. Two (9.5%) patients confessed to be not fully avoiding foods from the sensitizing group and one had recurrent allergic reactions (oral allergy syndrome); 7 (33.3%) patients admitted not always carrying their emergency medication and 1 had already needed it. Eleven (52.4%) patients stated that they had changed their vacation plans due to FA. Five (23.8%) referred to never or rarely reading food labels and 4 (19.0%) patients had a food allergic reaction following accidental exposure. Five (23.8%) referred to have increased monthly expenses due to FA and another 10 (47.6%) felt somehow impaired by their FA. Interestingly, all patients mentioned to be more confident with the diagnosis and management after an Allergist’s evaluation.

**Discussion:** Food allergy continues on the rise. The negative practical and psychological impairment associated with FA in both adults and allergic-children caregivers has been recently assessed. A negative impact on daily life was also evident in our patients and this needs to be addressed in order to improve disease management in all aspects. In this group, half of them admitted to changing vacation plans; almost one quarter had increased expenses because of their FA; almost one-fifth had a reaction following accidental exposure and almost half admitted feeling somehow impaired by their FA. All of the patients stated feeling more confident after consultation with a specialist.

**Conclusion:** The scope of an Allergist should also include helping patients cope with FA and reduce its interference in daily life.