



Press Release

MeDALL research team presented significant results on allergic diseases

Successful EU program's third annual meeting in Berlin with attendees from across Europe

Berlin, 13 February 2013 – On January 14-15, the third annual meeting of MeDALL was held in Berlin, Germany. MeDALL stands for Mechanisms of the Development of ALLergy and is an international four-year EU research project on the causes explaining the epidemic of allergic diseases. During the two-day meeting with 100 participants, the project's international researchers reported about their activities and achievements during 2012. Highly informative presentations, lively discussions, expert round tables and parallel training sessions were held and well received.

According to the program's work packages and 2012 outcomes the following important milestones were addressed:

- **MeDALL findings on classical phenotypes, and discussion of unsupervised allergic phenotypes.** As a basis for a validation of classical and novel phenotypes of allergic diseases, a case-control study is under discussion, comparing children in whom a specific phenotype is present with children without this phenotype.
- **Specific IgEs molecular profiling.** The spotting of the first batch of allergen microarrays was completed. Recombinant allergens were produced and validated for the second batch of chips.
- **Epigenetic markers of asthma and rhinitis in early life.** The objective was to perform a genome wide methylation study which may affect the development of allergic diseases, in a nested case-control design in four European birth cohorts. The top hits of this analysis will feed into the design of a custom made methylation chip.
- **Integration of epidemiological clinical and experimental data and hypothesis in MeDALL.** The knowledge management and bioinformatics infrastructure was established in relation with U-BIOPRED (IMI project), in order to enable systematic literature review, integrate birth cohort data and distribute results.
The development of a new method for the analysis of the immune status with a small number of cells from a small amount of blood is important to be highlighted. This method will help to perform efficient research on the blood of children particularly on the molecular and cellular mechanisms of allergy development.
- **Ethics of informed consent in early life research.** Most considerations of this investigation within MeDALL are related to the establishment of cohorts in MeDALL, consent/assent, communication of results, disclosure of incidental findings, and cross-border exchanges of samples/data.
- **Future research activities in birth cohorts of asthma and allergy.** 14 MeDALL research centres across Europe have developed a harmonized questionnaire on allergies for parents and adolescents as well as a harmonized protocol for clinical examinations. Both the questionnaire and the clinical protocol are currently being used to examine over 13,000 European children. The evaluation of the data will start at the end of 2013.
- **Junior sessions:** Postdoctoral researchers and PhD students were invited to attend and present their recent MeDALL results to the audience.

MeDALL coordinator Jean Bousquet (Inserm and Montpellier University, France) states that “MeDALL can look back on a successful year 2012. The MeDALL team has made further significant achievements for all work packages”. Scientific coordinator Josep M Antó (CREAL) states that “This is another step forward to raise the knowledge among doctors, patients as well as politicians and journalists about allergies as an undervalued major health problem, to eventually improve the situation for people with allergies in Europe.”

About MeDALL

MeDALL is an international four-year research project supported by the EU which started in December 2010. The MeDALL consortium encompasses 23 public and private institutions, including 3 European SMEs whose specific complementary scientific expertise will contribute to MeDALL objectives. The project is coordinated by the Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Medicale (INSERM), Paris, France and the Centre for Research in Environmental Epidemiology (CREAL), Barcelona, Spain. MeDALL has received funding from the European Union Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) under grant agreement n° 261357.

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