

PRESS RELEASE

Swine-Flu – a threat for Asthmatics?

Zurich, October 8, 2009: EAACI, the largest European organisation in the field of allergy, immunology and asthma, today hosted a specialist forum on “Swine-flu – a threat for asthmatics? What people with asthma should know” at its new premises on Genferstrasse 21 in Zurich. Dr. Thomas Heiniger, Cantonal Councillor and Head of the Department of Health of Zurich, extended a warm welcome to the EAACI’s new Executive Director Silvia Schaller, along with a top-class international delegation from the field of immunology and asthma.

One out of three Europeans suffers from allergies or asthma. For a person with asthma, a virus infection can be life-threatening. The swine-flu presents a similar risk. The potential complications are heavily dependent on the underlying health of the patient. Among those at risk from serious life-threatening symptoms and even death, are patients with pre-existing respiratory illnesses and also asthmatics. “One of the differences between the H1N1 swine-flu virus and the seasonal flu is that younger people become more frequently unwell than they do with the seasonal flu. Asthma patients should therefore take special care to keep their asthma under control”, states Professor Nikos Papadopoulos from the University of Athens.

What asthmatics should know about swine-flu

People with asthma are advised to take special note of general preventive measures such as hand hygiene or a change in greeting habits, and also to take special care of their health. If flu symptoms are suspected – aching joints, high fever, coughing, and headaches – asthmatics should consult their doctors immediately. “If asthma gets out of control, there is a risk of severe and possibly even life-threatening attacks during a flu epidemic. Influenza is not the most frequent cause of asthma attacks. However it can be an important trigger of such severe symptoms”, says Professor Papadopoulos.

Does a flu vaccination make sense for asthmatics?

Severe asthmatics are a risk group and vaccination against swine-flu is recommended. It can be assumed that the vaccine is very similar to previous flu vaccines, and that vaccination would be the lesser evil for asthmatics. “Is a commonly held misbelief that flu vaccination causes illness in asthmatics”, says Professor Papadopoulos. “This misbelief is due to the fact that vaccinations are normally given at times of year with high rates of flu-like illnesses from other viruses. When the symptoms then occur, they are falsely attributed to the vaccination.”

Zurich – a new centre for allergology and immunology

EAACI, the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, which is represented in 107 countries, has recently moved its headquarters to Zurich. From here, effectively at the heart of Europe, the European association wishes to promote scientific and educational projects in the field of allergy, immunology and asthma.



“As the world’s No. 1 location for science and technology, this is a further milestone for the Canton of Zurich”, says Dr. Heiniger with pride. EAACI is making a big investment in the future.

“We aim to provide the most efficient platform for scientific communication and education in the field of allergy and immunology, striving to ultimately ease patients’ lives”, says EAACI President Professor Jan Lötval. EAACI has already made a name for itself by organising the largest annual European congress for allergologists and immunologists and bringing together a broad range of specialists. The EAACI 2010 Congress will take place from 5th to the 9th June in London. Approximately 8’000 participants from all over Europe are expected.

About EAACI:

EAACI - The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology is a non-profit organisation active in the field of allergic and immunologic diseases such as asthma, rhinitis, eczema, occupational allergy, food and drug allergy and anaphylaxis. EAACI was founded in 1956 in Florence and has become the largest medical association in Europe in the field of allergy and clinical immunology. It includes 5’500 individual members from 107 countries, as well as 40 National Allergy Societies.

For further information:

EAACI Headquarters
Head of Communications
Panthea Sayah
Genferstrasse 21
8002 Zurich
Switzerland
Tel.: +41 44 205 55 33
Fax: +41 44 205 55 39
Mobile: +41 79 551 99 48
E-mail: panthea.sayah@eaaci.net
Internet : www.eaaci.net