

PRESS RELEASE

Allergies growing at alarming rate among children and teenagers: One out of two adults will suffer of a chronic allergic disease in 2015

Venice, November 10th 2009 – The number of children and teenagers with allergies and severe allergies is increasing in western countries and experts estimate that in 2015 one out of two adults will be suffering from chronic allergic symptoms.

The latest scientific research for an early diagnosis and a common “action plan” among all the experts who are involved in allergy management are the focus of the International Meeting “Pediatric Allergy and Asthma” that EAACI - European Academy for Allergy and Clinical Immunology is organizing in Venice, Italy, from Nov. 12th through 14th 2009.

According to the EU Global Health Status Report, one out of four children younger than 10 years old is affected by an allergic disease in the European Union. In particular, food allergies that more often cause severe reactions involving respiratory and cardiovascular manifestations such as anaphylactic shock seem to have doubled over the last 5 years. Allergic rhinitis is also reported to have increased threefold in the same period of time.

It is estimated that in 2015, one out of two adults will be suffering from chronic allergic symptoms such as asthma and atopic eczema.

There are also significant differences in prevalence of allergy among teenagers in EU countries, ranging from a 3.7% prevalence in Greece, to 16% in Finland up to 32% in the UK.

Such figures raise concerns on the heavy impact of allergic disease on the patients' quality of life, as well as on the increase of health costs in the community resulting in a general loss of productivity.

“Nonetheless, allergies are underestimated, often not correctly diagnosed and as a consequence, not properly treated,” says Professor Ian Lotvall, Director of the Department of Respiratory Medicine and Allergology at the University of Goteborg and President of EAACI.

An early diagnosis as well as a timely and individualized management represent the key elements to fight this “epidemic”, also in order to prevent complications and progression to a chronic disease. At the “Pediatric Allergy and Asthma” Meeting in Venice, more than 900 pediatricians and researchers from all over the world will gather and share experiences with outstanding experts from European and U.S. pediatric societies, including the American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology and the National Institute of Health (NIH-USA).

“The aim of the Meeting is to increase and refine knowledge on the new technologies for the identification and the early treatment of allergies in children”, says Professor Antonella Muraro, pediatrician and allergist, chairman of the Venice Meeting and member of the Board of Officers of EAACI.



The triggering factors of an allergic reaction can be various, ranging from pollen, to food, cosmetics, insect bites and drugs.

Preliminary epidemiological data from the European project Europrevall will be presented at the Venice Meeting, together with the EAACI Task Force on Guidelines for Food Allergies.

“The seven-fold increase over the last 10 years of the rate of hospitalizations due to acute allergic reaction to food in children from 0 to 14 years in the United States and England is alarming”, warns Professor Muraro, who is also the Head of the Referral Centre for Food Allergy Diagnosis and Treatment, Department of Pediatrics of the University of Padua.

The latest new diagnostic strategies of allergies and new approaches to find a “cure” for allergy will also be presented and evaluated during the Meeting, together with the preliminary results of ongoing clinical trials. The establishment of a “common language” between researchers and the several health professionals dealing with the allergic child will be highlighted with the ultimate goal to improve the quality of care of children with allergic diseases.

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.

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