

PRESS RELEASE

How do you feel? The psychological impact of food allergy

Istanbul/Zurich, 12 June 2011 - Perceived quality of life is worse for those with food allergy than those with diabetes because they live in a state of uncertainty, new research shows. Dr Anthony Dubois of the Beatrix Children's Hospital, The Netherlands, used a new psychological test to measure 'health-related quality of life' (HRQL) of food allergic patients, and compared them with those with type I diabetes.

Measuring the impact of food allergy in psychological terms is difficult because most patients have no physical symptoms most of the time, and death rates from allergy are low. "Hence there is a particular need for measurement of quality of life to assess the impact of food allergy in psychological terms," said Dr Dubois today at the Congress of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology in Istanbul.

This new test can be used on people of all ages and is available in many languages, and aims to assess quality of life in food-allergic individuals, but also look at the impact of accurate diagnosis using 'food challenge' tests (where an individual is exposed to different foods and any allergic response monitored), and subsequent management of their condition. "The studies show that uncertainty is a source of diminished quality of life in food allergic patients, and accurate diagnosis with challenge testing improves HRQL," said Dr Dubois.

Carrying an adrenaline auto injector might help, because it has the potential to reduce perceived uncertainty in people with food allergy and improve their HRQL. "Understanding these effects will allow us to treat patients' food allergy in a way which optimizes their willingness to follow the safety rules and their HRQL as well," he explained.

HRQL is also important because it can tell us what the 'cost' of food allergy is to the patient which cannot be measured in dollars and cents. Comparing different therapies for allergy in terms of their effectiveness and economic cost – and impact on quality of life is an important area and will be a focus of future study.

Symposium 4

NOTES TO EDITORS

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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 6'500 members from 107 countries, as well as 41 National Allergy Societies.

Throughout 2011, EAACI will develop different activities to celebrate the 100th anniversary of immunotherapy in Allergy, which will aim at increasing the knowledge in this field among healthcare professionals, increase awareness in the general population, and finally, promote the availability of immunotherapy for allergic patients.

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