

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **How do you like your eggs? A new test for egg allergy**

**Istanbul/Zurich, 15 June 2011 - A new allergy test aims to simplify the lives of many people with egg allergies. Previously, those with this allergy were advised to avoid all forms of egg, but some people can in fact tolerate cooked egg. Knowing this can make life much easier for the sufferer and their carers/family because the number of foods that need to be avoided reduces drastically. Currently available, commercial tests cannot discriminate between these different forms of egg allergy.**

The proteins in egg-white that cause an allergic reaction are ovomucoid and ovalbumin, and the test, developed by Professor Philippe Eigenmann of the University of Geneva, Switzerland, begins by exposing an individual to a 'food challenge' (that is, eating either raw or cooked egg) and then measures antibody levels in the blood. Raised antibody levels indicate an allergic response and they found that some people with egg allergy have either no reaction or only a mild reaction to denatured (cooked) proteins. "Instead of saying to patients 'you are allergic to egg, so you need to restrict all forms of egg in your diet', we might be able to tell them they are allergic to egg but can eat, for example, egg pasta or foods cooked with eggs; in daily life this really makes a difference," said Professor Eigenmann today.

Food allergies are common in children. "5-8% of children have a food allergy, and an allergy to eggs is most common," explained Professor Eigenmann at the Congress of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology in Istanbul. It can be difficult for parents and school staff looking after these children. "But if they can give the child egg pasta or a cookie, for example, it is much easier than having to avoid everything with egg and looking for traces of egg on menus or food labels or packaging."

The test is still under development in the laboratory, but if the outcome of trials in people with egg allergy are successful and it is clear that the test will be useful, it will be made more widely available. Indeed, Professor Eigenmann is currently in discussions with some large diagnostic companies. "We know that these tests allow better allergy diagnosis and also allow more specific predictions of the severity or persistence of allergy. If this proves to be a reliable test then it will probably be developed commercially over the next few years", he said. Future work will involve developing a similar test for dairy products.

## **Symposium 39**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

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**Publications:** Eigenmann PA, Oh JW, Beyer K. **Diagnostic testing in the evaluation of food allergy.** *Pediatr Clin North Am.* 2011 Apr; 58(2): 351-62.



Benhamou AH, Caubet JC, Eigenmann PA, Nowak-Wegrzyn A, Marcos CP, Reche M, Urisu A. **State of the art and new horizons in the diagnosis and management of egg allergy.** *Allergy*. 2010 Mar; 65(3): 283-9

#### **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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