

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### ***In the battle of the doctors, it's the allergic patients who win!***

**Zurich/Geneva, 25 February 2011 – The trial is over and the jury is ready to give its verdict: vaccines are of the utmost importance in the fight against allergies. A battalion of top health professionals debated open questions on allergy vaccines in the latest SummIT 2011 Meeting of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI), which experimented an innovative and successful format.**

With teams of doctors fighting for their ideas and presenting evidence against each other, just like a judiciary trial, the SummIT EAACI Meeting held in Geneva on Feb. 24 focused on unsolved key questions in the field of allergy vaccines. The world's top allergologists were divided in working groups, some "for" and some "against," discussing a wide range of topics.

The first point addressed was how the potency and composition of allergen extracts are measured in vaccines and if there is a possibility of having a common "unit" to do so and set a preparation standard across Europe for certain types of allergy vaccines. In this sense, some new techniques, like multiplex mass spectrometry, were discussed at the Meeting and seem to hold promise for measuring allergen content. Nevertheless, there is not a single unit which can be used to define all these characteristics in an allergen extract.

Another issue debated at the EAACI Meeting was the dose-efficacy relationship, or how much vaccine is necessary to administer in order for it to bring a result and build a barrier against the allergen. The working groups found that while higher doses of immunotherapy are generally more effective, adverse side effects are also usually more significant with increased doses, so there is a need to balance these two outcomes. Also the suitability of some surrogate markers, such as eye or nose challenges with the extracts, were considered of the utmost importance to measure the dose-response relation.

Also, the experts have not identified one single way of administering the vaccines as being better than another. Sublingual immunotherapy does not need a build-up phase to get to the maximum dose, which will actually be administered at a later stage, but subcutaneous immunotherapy does. It was agreed that relatively short initial phases seem the most convenient choice for injection immunotherapy because they are safer and less time-consuming for the patient.

For patients who are allergic to more than one substance, such as pollen and mites or pets, vaccines may still be useful, even if they contain only one of those allergens, typically the one that triggers the worse reaction, and not all of them. Allergy vaccines may help reduce the amount of patients with rhinitis who develop asthma, or even, prevent the establishment of allergy in high-risk children. Research and tests are being carried out to explore the long-term benefits of vaccines.



Patient representatives, regulators and some allergen manufacturers also took part in the EAACI Meeting, enriching the debate with their points of view and offering new approaches to the issue of allergy vaccines.

Although allergen immunotherapy will be a century old this year, since the first publication was released in 1911, it is not an "old fashioned" treatment. In the last years there has been a "quantum leap" in allergen immunotherapy, with increased safety and efficacy, but also convenience for the patients. Access to these treatments remains difficult in some European countries, where there are few specialists really expert in their use or the availability of such products is very limited. EAACI remains committed in spreading knowledge about allergy vaccines in the effort to provide the best possible immunotherapy and give every patient in need the chance to receive it.

**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 6'100 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.

**For further information:**

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