

The future of food allergy

Effective food allergy treatment remains strict avoidance of the offending allergenic food. Food allergy vaccines are in the process of development, but there is concern that once desensitised to one allergen such as peanut Ara h1, this may be followed by only a temporary period of food allergen tolerance before further sensitisations occur. The individual will then be at risk of developing further allergies to other food allergens, and so this treatment may be ineffective in the long term. Genetically modified (GM) foods devoid of the offending allergen have been explored, and again the fear is that individuals will subsequently go on to develop sensitisation to other allergens.

Heat-killed *Listeria* bacteria used in early dog trials seem to increase the dose of peanut allergen tolerated before a reaction occurs, and this may be an effective therapeutic option in the future.

Anti-IgE monoclonal antibodies seem to protect peanut allergic individuals by binding peanut specific IgE, but this treatment is expensive, has to be given by fortnightly injections and the treatment has to be continued indefinitely. Peptide vaccines and mutant vaccines are also being explored, but at this point in time the only effective treatment is specific food allergen avoidance.

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Declaration of conflict of interest

The author has no conflict of interest.

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NEWS

South African researchers receive awards at EAACI 2006 Congress in Vienna

Two South African researchers based at the University of Cape Town were recently honoured when they

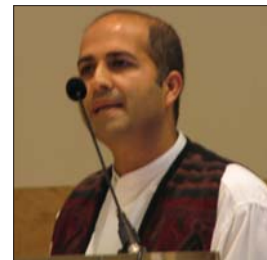


Natalie Niewenhuizen

received the best poster awards in their research area disciplines at the European XXV Congress of the European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology held in Vienna, Austria, in June 2006. Emergent researcher, Natalie Niewenhuizen based in the Immunology Section of the Institute of Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine and currently completing her PhD research on *Anisakis*-related allergy using mouse models received the Best Poster Award in the 'Dermatitis and Allergy' Section. Her research findings demonstrated that IL-4R, IL-13 and the IL-4R α play important and distinct roles in *Anisakis*-induced protein contact dermatitis and associated systemic sensitisation in mice. She collaborated with other UCT researchers who included Andreas Lopata, Mohamed Jeebhay and Frank Brombacher.

Associate Professor Mohamed Jeebhay from the Occupational and Environmental Health Research Unit received the Best Poster Award in the section on 'Clinical and Occupational Asthma'. His poster demonstrated that sensitisation to allergens from storage pests (mealworm and Oriental cockroach) in grain mill dust is a significant predictor of work-related asthma

symptoms among South African grain mill workers. He collaborated with UCT researchers Andreas Lopata and Roslynn Baatjies. Prof Jeebhay's research area focuses on bio-aerosols causing occupational allergy and asthma.



Prof. Mohamed Jeebhay

International Conference on 'Research on workplace health and safety: from the core to the margins'

Prof Jeebhay recently returned from Newfoundland/Labrador on the east coast of Canada where he co-organised the first international symposium on occupational allergy and asthma among seafood processors, together with Prof Barbara Neis from Memorial University in St John's, Canada. The symposium was held during the International Conference on 'Research on workplace health and safety: from the core to the margins' organised by Safetynet and Canadian Association for Research on Work and Health. The symposium brought together researchers from Norway, Canada, Denmark, Sweden and South Africa and was important in identifying the future research needs in occupational allergy and asthma research with specific reference to exposure assessment and control, health effects and exposure response relationships, allergen identification, pathophysiological mechanisms, diagnosis and treatment approaches among seafood processing workers.