

ANNOUNCEMENT

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World Allergy Week 2016 addresses climate change effects on pollen allergy season

World Allergy Organization increases awareness of quality of life issues with pollen allergies

Milwaukee, WI.—Warmer weather brings joy to most people but misery for hay fever (pollen allergy) sufferers. For 50 million people in the United States alone, spring means sneezing spasms, itchy and watery eyes, and congestion at an annual cost of 18 billion.* In other parts of the world at different times of the year similar seasonal allergies occur. According to the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood (ISAAC), pollen allergy prevalence in 13-to-14 year old children is 22.1% globally.**

The World Allergy Organization, together with many of its 97 national member societies, will address the theme of “Pollen Allergies – Adapting to a Changing Climate” during World Allergy Week 2016. Activities will take place from 4 to 10 April 2016 around the world.

Data show that carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are increasing which leads to overall warming trends; plants are producing more pollen which results in more pollen in the air and therefore increased allergen exposure.***

The lengthening of pollen allergy seasons is introducing an increased intensity of aeroallergen exposure.

Pollen allergy and other allergies, including allergy to molds, are increasing in prevalence and severity around the world and will continue to be a concern as temperatures rise and exposures increase.

Researchers have reported that changes in climate impose additional symptoms on individuals with pollen allergy. Allergy sufferers have had to begin managing their symptoms about two weeks earlier over the past 10 years than previously. “Data show that the pollen allergy season is arriving earlier but is not ending earlier. Each year is different. We are seeing a longer season mostly because of warmer temperatures,” said Mario Sánchez-Borges, MD, President of the World Allergy Organization.

Pollen allergy reduces quality of life by affecting the physical, psychological and social functioning of allergic individuals. Signs and symptoms of pollen allergies include sneezing 5 to 10 times repeatedly, itchy and runny nose, very itchy, watery eyes, nasal congestion, shortness of breath and sinus pressure. There can also be fatigue, irritability, anxiety, depression, frustration, and lower energy levels. Some sufferers will be unable to wear their contact lenses. The symptoms of pollen allergy are associated with economic costs such as loss of work and school productivity.

It is optimal for allergy sufferers to receive an accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment. The safest way to manage allergy symptoms is to treat them before they start to act up. Allergy specialists have the professional expertise to help pinpoint and confirm the allergies and advise on treatments and environmental control measures that can reduce symptoms and improve quality of life.

WAO will continually post updates on activities throughout World Allergy Week along with a list of resources and links to patient advocacy organizations at: www.worldallergyweek.org.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Allergies (2011, February 2); Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ToolsTemplates/EntertainmentEd/Tips/Allergies.html>

**Bjorksten B, Clayton T, Ellwood P, Stewart A, and Strachan D. Worldwide time trends for symptoms of rhinitis and conjunctivitis: Phase III of the International Study of Asthma and Allergies in Childhood. *Pediatric Allergy and Immunology* 2008; 19(2): 110-124. (doi:10.1111/j.1399-3038.2007.00601.x)

***Sofiev M, Bergmann K-C, editors. Allergenic Pollen, A Review of the Production, Release, Distribution and Health Impacts. (London: Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht), 2013.

About the World Allergy Organization

The World Allergy Organization (WAO) is an international alliance of 97 regional and national allergy, asthma and immunology societies. Through collaboration with its Member Societies WAO provides a wide range of educational and outreach programs, symposia and lectureships to allergists and clinical immunologists around the world and conducts initiatives related to clinical practice, service provision, and physical training in order to better understand and address the challenges facing allergy and immunology professionals worldwide. For more information, visit www.worldallergy.org.

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