



The shortest route from allergy research to treatment

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Heredity and the environment both have significance for patients with asthma, allergies and eczema. As a result both of these aspects are the subject of research at the Danish Allergy Centre at Copenhagen University Hospital, Gentofte, a unit that also houses the country's largest centre for work-related eczema, says Jeanne Duus Johansen, Professor at the University of Copenhagen.

What is the importance of your work – and which patient groups benefit from it?

As a centre for patients with complicated allergy illnesses, we receive patients from throughout Denmark – for example people who have had life-threatening allergic reactions during anaesthesia. We help many patients who discover that they cannot tolerate certain foods to find out why and advise them about which foods they can eat. We are also the largest centre in the country for work-related eczema, while a special unit is involved in research on infantile asthma and eczema.

How do you work – and who are your collaborators?

We have gathered allergy experts with various specialities in one centre with clinics treating many patients and research units involved in all aspects of the diseases. In this way, the knowledge generated benefits patients quickly.

We also collaborate closely with patient associations, employers, trade unions and relevant authorities. Thus, we are able to rapidly turn new knowledge into information, recommendations and legislation for the prevention of allergies.

In terms of research, we collaborate closely with the University of Copenhagen, the Technical University of Denmark and various national and international networks in allergy, asthma and eczema.

What are some of the important results of your centre's work in recent years?

Our group contributed to the discovery of a mutation in a gene of great significance to the development of eczema, allergy and asthma. The mutation is found in eight per cent of the population and, through collaboration with the Department of Clinical Biochemistry here at this hospital, we are now able to test all patients for this mutation.

Our group is also an important partner in the development of a new allergy vaccine in tablet form, which is now available to patients with grass allergy.

Finally, we have generated the knowledge that forms the basis for European legislation on nickel, which has resulted in a fall in the frequency of nickel allergy among women, from 20 to 10 per cent.

What are the perspectives of your work?

In the future we will be able to make a profile of individuals at risk of developing allergic diseases due to hereditary or environmental causes. This may be used to treat patients earlier and for prevention, and also to develop individualised treatments and information.

The coming years will provide us with more knowledge about the importance of circumstances in the embryonic stage and in the first years of life for the development of asthma, allergies and eczema. This will also result in completely new treatment and prevention options.

Why they received the award

The Danish Allergy Centre is awarded Global Excellence for its strong international position in allergy research. Based on the fundamental idea of bridging basic research and patient care, the centre is in itself an innovation. The centre is able to turn new knowledge into practice to benefit patients with allergies, an area of illness that is becoming increasingly common.

Both the centre's work in knowledge dissemination about allergy diseases and its patient satisfaction are exceptional. Strong collaboration with industry, along with a sharp focus on training, ensures that the centre has the ability to compete internationally.

Facts

The Danish Allergy Centre is part of the Department of Dermatoallergology at Gentofte Hospital and has approx. 60 employees.

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