

### Sesame Allergy Is Significant, Serious and Growing Globally

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, IL (July 15, 2005) – Sesame allergy is a significant and serious problem found to be growing globally according to a report published this month in *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, the scientific journal of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI).

Venu Gangur, D.V.M., M.V.S., Ph.D., and colleagues at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Mich., through a literature search using the PubMed database, found a significant increase in the number of reports of hypersensitivity to sesame since the first report from the United States in 1950.

Sesame has been added to the list of major food allergens for use in food labeling in European Commission (EC) and Canada, but it is not yet included in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) listing of allergenic foods for labeling purposes in the United States.

According to the authors, in spite of the growing use of sesame seed and oil in the food, pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries, research and public awareness on sesame allergy are very limited. It is widely used in the baking industry, where there are reports of occupational allergy (asthma and urticaria) to sesame involving bakers. Sesame oil in injections, ointments and cosmetics has been reported to cause contact allergic dermatitis.

A prevalence study of immediate hypersensitivity in Australian children found that sesame was in fourth place, following egg, milk and peanut, and was more common than that to any single tree nut studied.

Among Israeli children sesame was the third most common food causing sensitization following egg and cow's milk, and it was second only to cow's milk as a leading cause of anaphylaxis – a severe, system-wide allergic reaction that is potentially fatal.

Almost any food can trigger a hypersensitivity reaction in sensitized people, but most food allergies in the United States are caused by eight major foods: milk, eggs, fish, wheat, tree nuts, legumes (particularly peanuts and soybeans), crustaceans and mollusks.

Food allergies affect up to 4 percent of American adults and 6 percent of infants under 3 years of age. Although food allergy occurs most often in infants and children, it can appear at any age and be caused by foods that have been eaten for years without problem.

Many parts of the body may be affected by food allergy, and the frequency and severity of symptoms can range from mild to life threatening. Among the symptoms of food allergy are vomiting, nausea, stomach cramps, indigestion, diarrhea, hives, skin rash, headaches, asthma and respiratory symptoms such as nasal congestion, sneezing and runny nose. In rare cases, systemic anaphylaxis can occur that is potentially fatal if untreated in a timely manner.

Patient information on allergic diseases including food allergy and anaphylaxis is available by calling the ACAAI toll free number at (800) 842-7777 or visiting its Web site at [www.acaaai.org](http://www.acaaai.org), or the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) at [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org).

The ACAAI is a professional medical organization comprising nearly 5,000 qualified allergists-immunologists and related health care professionals. The College is dedicated to the clinical practice of allergy, asthma and immunology through education and research to promote the highest quality of patient care.