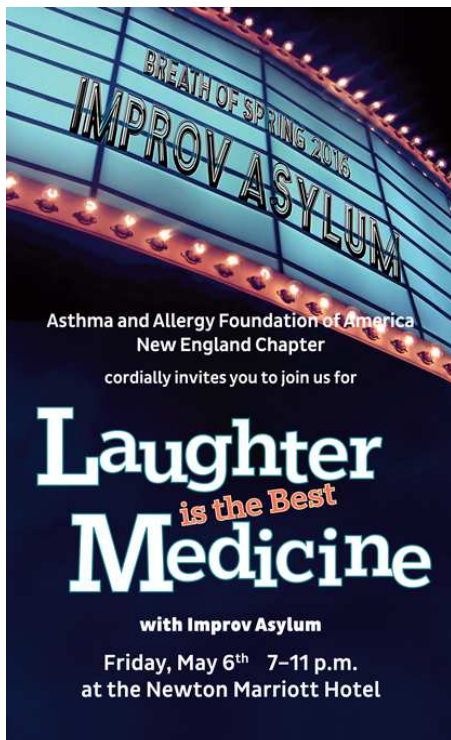


ASTHMA & ALLERGY BULLETIN

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RESEARCH UPDATE

How does your age or mental health affect your ASTHMA?

By Frank J. Twarog, MD, PhD

Articles in three medical journals recently explored the connection between a person's age or mental outlook and how well they benefit from asthma treatment. They conclude that both increased age and the presence of emotional problems can make it harder for people to do a good job of managing their asthma.

The first article is part of a National Institutes of Health "Asthma Clinical Research Network" (ACRN)

ongoing study. It included 1,200 individuals with mild to moderate persistent asthma, with a nearly equal number of male and female participants.

This study found that "treatment failures" increased in people over the age of thirty. This means that as adults get older they are more likely to experience unplanned office visits, nighttime awakenings, a course of oral steroids, or emergency department visits.

(continued on page 2)

FOOD ALLERGY ADVOCACY

Speak up on Food Labels and Airline Safety

Federal legislation is currently pending to improve food allergy labels and airline policies. *You can make a difference!*

Make a phone call or send a short e-mail or letter today. Ask your members of Congress to support these bills. Explain why this legislation is important to you and your family.

Food Labeling Modernization Act of 2015

This bill would update food labeling regulations and add sesame to the list of major food allergens.

Airline Access to Emergency Epinephrine Act of 2015

This bill would address challenges faced by airline passengers with allergies.

(continued on page 4)



How does your age and mental health affect your asthma?

(continued)

This decreased responsiveness to treatment worsened for each year over 30 years of age, and was cited as something that warrants further study. Factors which seemed to influence people's response to treatment included lower lung function and having developed asthma at an earlier age or having had it for a longer duration.

An increased risk of treatment failure was primarily found to affect people's response to inhaled corticosteroids and not to other asthma therapies. Their responses to long-acting beta agonist and leukotriene modifiers (e.g., Singulair®) were less likely to result in treatment failures.

One potential reason for the change in responsiveness with age may be due to the type of airway inflammation which occurs as we get older. Younger people with asthma tend to have allergic stimuli, leading to TH-2-driven inflammation),

which is more responsive to steroid treatment. Older people have primarily a non-allergic (TH-1) mechanism which triggers their asthma.

The authors did conclude that other factors, such as socio-economics, geography, and how well people follow their medication plan may play a role. However, they found that sticking to the recommended use of medication actually increased with age.



Most of the individuals participating in this study were between 30 and 45 years of age. Only 10% were 50 years of age or older and only a very small number were over 65. There was a very low representation of members of minority groups. Nonetheless, their

findings are intriguing and certainly deserve further study.¹

Older People with Asthma

A related study evaluated the quality of life in older people with asthma. Researchers in Cincinnati had 164 individuals 65 years of age or older complete a questionnaire about various aspects of asthma-related quality of life in the previous two weeks.

Emotional function, environmental stimuli, and activity limitation are among the important factors evaluated in the 15-item survey. They found that poorer scores on these aspects of quality of life were associated with emergency department visits, along with co-factors such as gastroesophageal reflux (GERD), non-allergic asthma, and asthma which began in adulthood after 40 years of age.

For those with stable asthma, there was no difference between these older subjects and previous studies with younger populations. This is one of the first studies using such a survey instrument to evaluate quality of life in older asthma patients.

Interestingly, traffic pollution as a predictor for poor quality of life with asthma was highlighted as important. Older adults with asthma may be more susceptible to traffic pollution-related effects than younger

(continued on next page)

Asthma-Friendly Home Checklist for Older Adults

AAFA New England has published a checklist to help older adults take control of allergies and asthma and make their home a healthier environment. It contains practical suggestions for avoiding or controlling allergens and irritants, and other tips about managing asthma.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the disease is well-controlled in only 1 in 5 adults aged 65 and older with asthma.

Download a PDF of the two-page "Asthma-Friendly Home Checklist" at the "Asthma and Older Adults" section of the AAFA New England website (www.asthmaandallergies.org). Get a copy for yourself, or help seniors with asthma stay out of the hospital by distributing copies of the checklist in your community or to your patients.



Probiotics: Can they help prevent allergies?

The use of probiotics is one of the methods that have been considered as a possible way to prevent allergic conditions. This would be an intriguing, generally safe, and low-cost approach, if it proved effective. The results, however, have been somewhat controversial.

A multi-center study from Canada, Mexico, Vatican City, Tokyo, Colombia, and Italy included a systematic review of randomized trials of probiotics.



They evaluated 2,403 articles published until December, 2014. Of all these studies, only 29 fulfilled the careful criteria the authors required.

The probiotics in these studies were used during pregnancy, during breastfeeding, or given directly to infants.

The authors conclude that there are no data showing that probiotics under these conditions influence emergence of allergic disease, aside from atopic dermatitis (eczema).

This comprehensive literature search had a number of strengths, including the large number of articles surveyed. The limitations, however, result in what the authors consider low certainty of their conclusions, because of a variety of factors, including indirect evidence and inconsistency between the many studies in reporting their results.

The findings of this study agreed with the conclusions of previous research: probiotics used in pregnant women, during breastfeeding, or during early infancy decreases the frequency of eczema.¹

1. Cuello-Garcia, C.A. et al. Probiotics for the prevention of allergy: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled studies. *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, 136:952, 2015.

How does your age and mental health affect your asthma? (continued)

individuals. The authors indicated that residential proximity to traffic exhaust should be considered for patients greater than 65 years of age who have asthma. Other factors leading to poor quality of life include obesity and gastroesophageal reflux.

Non-allergic asthma, which is more common in older adults, also seemed associated with poorer quality of life. Curiously, in this study late-onset asthma (diagnosed after the age of 40) was associated with better quality of life. The authors speculate that people with long-standing asthma may not be complying with current education and treatment strategies, or that those who were diagnosed at an older age may do a better job of following their medication plans.

Given the increasing prevalence of asthma in the elder populations, findings from this study should be considered relevant to managing asthma in this age group.²

Emotions Play a Role

Another study evaluated the role of anxiety and depression as contributing factors to asthma. This study included 263 patients with a mean age of 39.2 years. More than one-third (36.9%) reported anxiety, and 11% had depression. Both of these conditions were associated with lower scores on the Asthma Control Test (ACT), a commonly-used brief questionnaire that asks people to recall and report on how they have been affected by asthma in the previous four weeks.

In this study, patients with both anxiety and depression had a perception of worse asthma control than those without these co-existing conditions.

These data suggest that we should be cautious about relying on the



ACT test score as an accurate measure of asthma control.

Let your physician know if you have emotional concerns that could be playing in role in how you approach living with asthma.³

1. Dunn, R.M. et al. Impact of age and sex on response to asthma therapy. *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*, 192:551, 2015.

2. Kannan, J.A. et al. Significant predictors of poor quality of life in older asthmatics. *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, 115:198, 2015.

3. Ciprandi, G. et al. The impact of anxiety and depression on outpatients with asthma. *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, 115:408, 2015.

Frank J. Twarog, M.D., Ph.D., regularly contributes the Research Update column for this newsletter. He is an allergist in Brookline and Concord, MA, and Clinical Professor at Harvard Medical School.

FOOD ALLERGY ADVOCACY: (continued from page 1)

Food Labeling Modernization Act of 2015 (HR4016)

Congress has introduced important legislation to improve the way manufacturers label food allergens. This legislation would also add sesame to the list of major food allergens.

Currently, only eight allergens - milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soy - must be listed on food labels.

Sesame seeds and oil are used as ingredients in many common foods, but are often vaguely labeled as “spices” or “natural seasoning”. Adding sesame to the list of major allergens would help protect the estimated 300,000 to 500,000 Americans who are allergic to sesame.

The Food Labeling Modernization Act also requires updates to the nutrition facts panel on packaged foods, and would ensure that warning labels use clear, easy-to-understand language. Within three years, signs



listing major food allergens must be placed next to any non-packaged foods being offered for sale in stores.

The Food Labeling Modernization Act would protect Americans with food allergies and allow consumers to make healthier choices when buying food. Updates to food labeling requirements are overdue; the list of major food allergens has not been updated since 2004.

You can learn more about the current food labeling regulations and the proposed new requirements at www.FDA.gov (search in the “FOOD” tab for food allergen labeling).

Airline Access to Emergency Epinephrine Act of 2015

Congress has introduced a bill (S.1972) that would require airlines to carry epinephrine auto-injectors and provide training for crew members to recognize the signs of a severe allergic reaction and use the auto-injectors.

For those at risk for severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis), airline travel can be a particularly stressful experience. Airline policies for accommodating passengers with allergies can vary from one airline

carrier to another, and often the policies are inconsistently enforced.

The lack of easy access to medical care makes flying with allergies even more of an anxiety-inducing experience. The Airline Access to Emergency Epinephrine Act aims to make air travel safer for those with allergies.

This bill would require airlines (including foreign carriers) to carry on each aircraft at least two packs of epinephrine auto-injectors, replace them on expiration or use, and to train crewmembers to recognize the symptoms of anaphylaxis and administer autoinjectable epinephrine.

The bill would also direct the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study on current air carrier policies regarding food allergy accommodations and to submit a report to Congress on the findings.

Additionally, the bill would direct the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) to clarify that the epinephrine ampules already found in on-board emergency medical kits can be used to treat anaphylaxis.

Let your legislators know that they should protect the health and safety of people with life-threatening allergies by supporting these important bills.

AAFA New England

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS provide you with opportunities to

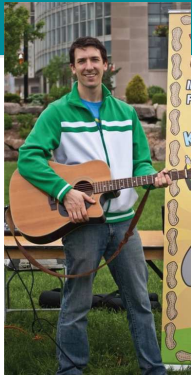
- Learn from experts • Get your questions answered
- Meet others who share your concerns • Find resources and gain confidence

For upcoming meeting dates and topics:

visit our website (www.asthmaandallergies.org) or call 781-444-7778.

To receive support group program announcements, send your e-mail address and your location to aafane@aafane.org.

Kyle Dine Entertains and Educates at AAFA New England Family Food Allergy Concert and EXPO



Kyle Dine brought his inspiring music to our area for his 4th annual AAFA New England Family Concert and Food Allergy Expo this March in Norwood, MA. Kyle is an amazing performer and educator who writes songs that empower, support and educate children with food allergies and their friends.

Families from all over the region brought their children to sing and learn as well as to simply enjoy being in the company of so many others with food allergies.



Kyle got the children involved in learning about the top 8 allergens, symptoms of a food allergy reaction, and what they should do to stay safe. Learn more about Kyle's songs, school appearances, and DVD at www.kyledine.com.



This year's EXPO featured samples, coupons, and lots of great information from representatives from many of the 25 concert sponsors. (Their logos on are on the Kyle Dine event page of our website.)

Pictured l. to r.: Mark Uzzell, AAFA New England Board member who spearheaded the event; allergist John Lee and psychologist Jennifer LeBovidge from Boston Children's Hospital Food Allergy Program.

We're on the Food Allergy Journey Together! by Allie Bahn

As I sat on gym bleachers overlooking an energetic audience of children dancing to a song called "Cool Bracelet," I reflected on how lucky they were to have this experience.

It was a Saturday afternoon and I was at the AAFA New England Family Concert and Food Allergy Expo with songwriter and performer Kyle Dine.

When Kyle and I were growing up, there was nothing even remotely like this. Neither of us met anyone with life-threatening food allergies until we were 16 and 17 years old. I never knew anyone else who had to think twice about what they ate, never mind wear a Medic Alert® bracelet and carry epinephrine everywhere.

All I could think about as I watched Kyle perform was how comforting it must feel for children to know they are not the ONLY ones with food allergies. Although there are moments for every "allergic reactor" where they may feel lonely, these children know they are not alone.

The show hit every main point that a child growing up with food allergies should be aware of. Kyle told the audience about his own food allergies and encouraged children to raise their hand if they had the same allergy. He asked questions like, "What can you do to help stay safe?" and talked about his Golden Rule of "read it before I eat it." There were also engaging songs, puppets, quiz shows, jokes and dancing.

By the end of the show, Kyle made it clear that you can do and be anything with food allergies. Kyle's uplifting attitude and positive energy sent a powerful message to the audience. He showed children with food allergies that they can shine and made



Allie Bahn is an elementary school teacher in the Boston area and is also a food allergy writer, blogger, speaker, and coach for families with children with allergies. Visit her website at www.missallergicreactor.com.

everyone feel included in the food allergy journey together.

Kyle has reached countless children all over North America and abroad with his allergy teaching and advocacy. As someone who still rarely meets another adult with food allergies, it was awesome to meet Kyle and his beautiful family! I learned that we both participated in "normal" childhood activities growing up. Now we are both avid travelers who have lived abroad.

Kyle and I may have both grown up with multiple life-threatening food allergies, but we are two examples of "allergy kid" grown-ups who did not let our life-threatening food allergies get in the way of living life to the fullest!

Thanks to AAFA New England for hosting Kyle Dine in concert. Learning about food allergies with him was so beneficial for many families.

Around AAFA New England

We help schools, child care providers and health professionals help YOU and others manage asthma and food allergies!



**Albert L. Sheffer, M.D.
1929 — 2015**

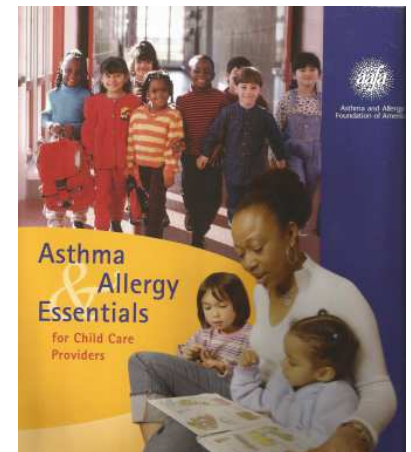
We are saddened to announce the passing of Albert L. Sheffer, MD, the Founding President of AAFA New England. He was a beloved allergist to generations of people in the Boston area, who benefited from his very personal care and wisdom.

Dr. Sheffer was a national and international leader in the field of allergic diseases, a teacher and mentor to many physicians, and a pioneer in advancing the importance of patient education to improve asthma management.

AAFA New England was his “baby,” which he continued to nurture over the decades, and we will miss him greatly.

“Asthma and Allergy Essentials for Child Care Providers”

That’s the title of the workshop we offer to help keep children safe and healthy when they are cared for outside of their homes. A limited amount of grant funding is available to offer the workshops free. Contact Sharon Schumack, AAFA New England’s Director of Education & Programs, to schedule a program in your area.



Asthma & Allergy Basics

“Asthma Basics” and “Allergy Basics” brochures cover all of the most important things you or your patients need to know about living well with allergies or asthma.

We’ll gladly mail you a single copy free. Bulk rates are available for healthcare providers to order copies for patients.

The information in these brochures is available as PowerPoint presentations for your community or workplace. Give us a call to make arrangements.



School nurses:

Donations Available for Your Needy Students

AAFA New England can provide you with spacers and peak flow meters for teaching purposes and for use by students with asthma. We also have teaching materials and activity books.

On our wish list... Can you help?

It’s getting very hard to find parts for our vintage photocopier.

Does your company have an extra copier, or one that you will be replacing soon?

We also need a laptop computer and an LCD projector to use for our many educational programs.

AAFA New England would greatly appreciate the tax-deductible donation!



Let's have some fun together this summer!

Have some fun hanging out with people who really “get it,” and help your children feel less alone with their allergies.

How about a walk in a nature reserve, an afternoon of bowling, meeting in a park, or attending a “peanut-allergy friendly” baseball game? These are only some of the many possibilities for AAFA New England area families to meet for fun activities.



Help plan family meet-ups.

Let us know your ideas for activities your family would enjoy, and whether you can help plan or run them. Contact Sharon Schumack at AAFA NE: 781-444-7778 or sharons@aaafane.org.

Baseball fans:

We need you to serve as a team captain for a family “meet-up” at one of the PawSox or Lowell Spinners “peanut-allergy-friendly” games. It’s simple: choose a date; we’ll publicize it and everyone will buy their own family’s tickets. Your job will be to “meet and greet” AAFA New England families and snap a few photos.



ASTHMA & ALLERGY BULLETIN

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*Andrew Keegan
Kevin Lynch
Matthew Ryan
Albert Sheffer, M.D.*

Donations have recently been
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Crystel Vasquez

Donations can also be made in honor of
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To contribute a memorial gift or tribute in honor of a special person or a birthday or other event, please send a check payable to AAFA New England. Credit cards accepted by phone, mail or on-line: www.asthmaandallergies.org. Please include the name of the person being honored or memorialized, and who you want us to notify of your donation.



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

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Research Update:

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- Probiotics: Can they help prevent allergies?

We're on the Food Allergy Journey Together!



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Don't miss this important regional forum!

Traditional Chinese Medicine for Food Allergy, Asthma and Eczema: A Research Update



Tuesday, May 3, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

FREE - No registration required

**Meet Allergist and researcher
Xiu-Min Li, MD**

Professor of Pediatrics & Immunobiology; Director, Center for Chinese Herbal Therapy for Allergy and Asthma; Division of Pediatric Allergy & Immunobiology; Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, NY

Dr. Li will present her research and clinical experience as a pioneer in developing a botanical drug, based on traditional Chinese herbal formulas, to treat asthma, food allergy, and other allergic conditions.

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(Shipleigh Auditorium, second floor)