

National Jewish Faculty Present Research

MARCH 15, 2004

DENVER — National Jewish faculty presented research findings and professional advice to thousands of allergists, pulmonologists and immunologists at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology in San Francisco, March 19-23. Listed below are a few highlighted presentations.

- [Blacks Less Responsive to Asthma Medication](#)
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Blacks Less Responsive to Asthma Medication

Blacks with asthma generally suffer more severe disease and die more often than do those of other racial and ethnic groups. Joseph Spahn, MD, and his colleagues found that, on average, cells from both asthmatic and non-asthmatic blacks are less responsive to glucocorticoids than are cells from non-blacks. The findings suggest that blacks' more severe asthma may arise from a diminished responsiveness to steroids, the primary controller medication for asthma. [Abstract](#)

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Are Allergies and Asthma Preventable?

Andy Liu, MD, thinks so, eventually. During a plenary session on Saturday and a dinner symposium on Monday, Dr. Liu will outline some early successes, current trials and the hygiene hypothesis, which serves as a theoretical framework for attempts to prevent asthma and allergies.

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Living with Food Allergies

Food allergies strike fear in the hearts of many parents who worry that their allergic children may mistakenly consume something that can, in extreme cases, cause anaphylaxis and death. Yet research has shown that many people fail to take the basic precautions that can drastically reduce chances of a severe reaction to food. Dan Atkins, MD, and [Allan Bock](#), MD, will speak during a Sunday symposium on Practical Management of Food Allergy. Later that day, Dr. Atkins will moderate a panel discussion on Managing Food Allergy in School-Aged Children.

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Maybe It Isn't Asthma

Many patients who come to National Jewish with uncontrollable asthma don't really have asthma after all. They have [vocal cord dysfunction](#), an involuntary closing of the vocal cords that mimics asthma. The good news is that, once diagnosed, these patients can often stop taking the multitude of asthma and other medications, many of which have serious side effects. Instead they practice exercises that finally help them overcome breathing problems. Susan M. Brugman, MD, will review diagnosis, treatment and epidemiology of vocal cord dysfunction during an allied health workshop Sunday morning.

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Beryllium, an "Unrecognized Epidemic"

[Karin Pacheco](#), MD, will present information about the health effects of beryllium, cobalt and other metals during a Sunday afternoon workshop. Rapidly growing use of the metal beryllium, combined with lax regulations and inadequate medical surveillance, are creating an "unrecognized epidemic" of chronic beryllium disease, according to a recent commentary in *The Lancet*. Dr. Pacheco will outline clinical symptoms, diagnosis, industries and jobs that pose the greatest risk of developing this disease.

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Is It the Allergy or the Allergy Medication that Makes You So Sleepy?

It isn't only allergy medications that can make you sleepy; hay fever itself can cause significant sedation and cognitive impairment. During a dinner symposium on Sunday, [Bruce Bender](#), PhD, will discuss the relative roles of seasonal allergies and allergy medications in causing sedation and performance impairment among hay fever patients. Dr. Bender concludes that sedation caused by the disease is as much of a problem as sedation caused by medications, and that it is therefore as important to seek the most effective medication as it is to look for the least sedating one.

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Finding Asthma Patients While They Are Still Young

Undiagnosed and untreated asthma is a common problem, as outlined in at least two other sessions during this conference. Young children can be particularly difficult to diagnose. But once asthma patients are diagnosed and begin controller therapy, they have fewer symptoms and have fewer exacerbations. [Ronina Covar](#), MD, and her colleagues tested the ability of a questionnaire to assess young children with suspected asthma. It worked, and could help primary care physicians identify young children who would benefit from asthma controller medications. Use of an asthma risk questionnaire to identify young children likely to benefit from controller therapy. [Abstract](#)

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Asthma Could be Several Diseases Masquerading as One

People who develop asthma as children may have a different disease than those who develop it as an adult, according to an oral abstract presented Monday by Sally Wenzel, MD Wenzel and her colleagues found that the absence or presence of inflammatory cells, called eosinophils, helped distinguish differences among asthma patients. The findings add to the growing body of evidence that asthma is not a single disease, but a group of syndromes with different origins and biological characteristics [Abstract](#)

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 120 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the media resources page.

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