

Report on the Symposium “What’s New in Allergy?”

Dr. Marco Ho

The Second Joint Symposium of the Hong Kong Society for Paediatric Immunology Allergy and Infectious Diseases (HKSPIAID) and Hong Kong Institute of Allergy (HKIA) entitled “What’s new in Allergy?” was successfully held on 16 March 2016 (Wednesday) during the lunch hour at Eaton Hotel, Jordan, Hong Kong.

Dr. Mike YW Kwan, President of HKSPIAID and Dr Marco HK Ho Council Member and Co-Chair of Public Engagement Subcommittee of the HKIA moderated the meeting. The invited speaker Professor Katie Allen is Professor of Department of Pediatrics, the University of Melbourne; Director of the Centre for Food & Allergy Research; and Theme Director of Population Health at Murdoch Children’s Research Institute. She shared with a well-attended audience the latest research outputs of the HealthNuts project and insightful ideas on various hypotheses for prevention of food allergies.

The most intriguing finding was that children born in Australia by Asian migrant couples seem to have a much higher risk of nut allergy than non-migrant and non-Asian children by background. Professor Allen explained that migration from Asia after the early infant period appears to be a protective factor against the development of nut allergy. For Australian-born Asian children, their exposure to a different diet, bacterial and UV environment could be environmental risk factors. “We know there are rising rates of migration from East Asia to Australia. Our finding that migration from Asia to Australia after birth can protect against early onset allergic disease such as food allergy provides a potent clue for us to follow when trying to understand why food allergy is on the rise,” said Allen. The results, she said, suggest that removing children from the Asian environment or conversely exposing them to environmental risk factors in our Western environment uncovers a genetically-determined risk of food allergy in children of Asian descent.

Her stimulating talk generated some heated discussion on further research. The audience was challenged by the notion that Hong Kong may consider contributing to a “reverse migration” study of looking into nut allergy prevalence among children born in Asia from expatriate or foreign background. The meeting was granted with CME accreditation from several Colleges and CNE for nurses. It was supported by the Hong Kong Paediatric Nurse Associations and generously sponsored by Danone Nutricia.



From left to right: Dr. Mike Kwan, Prof. YL Lau, Prof. Katie Allen, Dr. KY Lee, Dr Marco Ho.