The Texas Children’s Hospital Food Allergy Program had a banner year in 2017! The mission of the program is to provide high-quality patient care, increased access to cutting-edge research, innovative treatment advances and quality patient support groups for children with food allergies. We accomplished our mission this year.

The program saw a tremendous increase in the number of children treated for food allergies through food desensitization research studies, with a total of seven ongoing studies. Through these studies, we are helping food allergic children avoid life threatening allergic reactions. We are proud to provide access to state of the art research studies and contribute to the development of oral and epicutaneous immunotherapy for all food allergic children.

The scientific team of the Food Allergy Program helped discover an innovative treatment for eosinophilic esophagitis through a 4-food elimination diet. We learned new aspects of the response of peanut allergic children taking large amounts of peanut flour during peanut oral immunotherapy. These observations were presented at national meetings and in international medical journals.

We were also thrilled to have our first Eosinophilic Esophagitis Family Day in October of 2017 to support children and families with eosinophilic gastrointestinal diseases! You will hear more about all of our support programs inside this newsletter.

We are most proud of our partnerships with the Houston food allergy community. None of the growth of the program would be possible without the support of those who care deeply about the needs of food allergic children. There is so much more to do to advance treatment for those affected by food allergies and we are looking forward to the upcoming year!
The Fourth Annual Food Allergy Symposium, held on September 16, 2017, was an incredible time for Greater Houston food allergic families.

Yearly since 2014, our program has provided educational resources and support to the families with food allergies through the Food Allergy Symposium. Given Hurricane Harvey, we assumed the attendance this year would be low, but boy, were we wrong! We had over 180 attendees and the excitement was palpable! Families of children with food allergies were educated about the basics of food allergies, the newest research, how to manage diet and nutrition, anxiety, and what it is like to participate in research studies from the physician, patient and parent perspectives.

Our Q+A session on Food Immunotherapy was one of the most popular, with many parents and children listening attentively to one of our young patients and his mom discussing their experience of taking part in a Food Immunotherapy research study. We had a wonderfully interactive audience with many insightful questions addressed by the family and by our Food Immunotherapy Director, Dr. Katherine Anagnostou, MD, PhD.

All of the experts who spoke at the Symposium were outstanding, including Dr. Suzanne Mouton-Odum (Assistant Professor of Psychology at Baylor) and Ms. Leah Robilotto (FARE Community Engagement Senior Associate) and our own food allergy physician Dr. Sara Anvari. From our Woodlands Campus we were pleased to have Drs. Karen Tuano and Neha Seth educate new food allergy families.

A special thanks to Ms. Christina Cowperthwait who organized the event with incredible precision and Mrs. Theresa Aldape who led the Food Allergy Family Network (FAFN) parent leaders, organizing all attendees into regions by zip code so families could connect with each other.

Families of children with food allergies were educated about the basics of food allergies, the newest research, how to manage diet and nutrition, anxiety, and what it is like to participate in research studies. Excellent speakers included Ms. Daisy Tran, RN, Mrs. Kathy Green, RN and Ms. Lauren Kronisch, RD. The HEB-Food Allergy Program Cart was on display with the help of Mr. Victor Cardenas and Ms. Lorraine Lyter-Reed.

Ms. Avina Nguyen, CHES, Ms. Holly Emerson, CCLS, and Ms. Munazza Noor led the Children’s Session with separate sessions for both teens and young children. Ms. Adriana Kelly, patient advocate, led the teen session. The children spoke with "Nutti the Squirrel" from the United Kingdom and the book’s author, Ms. Caroline Brown, answered questions by Skype. Special recognition goes to Ms. Kathy Pitts for organizing this collaboration.
For kids, learning is more memorable when it is fun and engaging, it is no different when educating young food allergic patients! This year, we had 65 attendees from the ages of 4-17 years old. Dr. Suzanne Mouton-Odum, clinical psychologist presented relevant tips to help with anxiety related to food allergies and Adriana Kelly, food allergy teen advocate, shared her experience of growing up with a milk allergy and how she overcame the challenges.

Separate sessions were provided based on age appropriateness. Children between 4-8 years old were educated on the top 8 allergens through story time, a surprise visit from Nutti the Squirrel all the way from England and innovative educational games (i.e. Food Allergy Land). Older patients (9+) followed a one-day competency-based curriculum to share their experiences to peers, prepare and avoid reactions (taught how to use various auto epinephrine injectors and learned basic food allergy facts through Jumbo Food Allergy Jenga), and build awareness with creative juices through art and technology.

The children’s session has tripled in size since the first symposium and continues to expand to teens at next year’s symposium.

Advocacy for Patients at School

Margot, mother of a food allergy patient

When Ellie was very young, eating “food from home” was just something she did. As she grew older and entered the upper elementary grades, she grew more aware that her anaphylactic allergies made her different – and of the potential severe consequences of exposure to her allergens.

Unfortunately, so did her classmates, and a stressful year of exclusion and bullying ensued. For her and for us, the symposium was a breath of fresh air. She met other allergic tweens and teens, and she discovered that nearly every one of them had experienced the same things. Seeing herself as one of the gang was empowering. The Symposium’s educational components – about living with food allergies – gave her some specific tools. After the symposium, Ellie set her mind to doing something about food-allergy bullying. She created food allergy specific posters as part of a school project, which she hopes to continue, with the aim of getting these posters to schools to help reduce bullying for other kids with food allergies.
Dietary Tips for the Food Allergic
Contributed by Lauren Kronisch, RDN, LD

Cross-Contamination labeling
Call the company number on the product box to determine if it was made on the same equipment as your allergen. If it was, strictly avoid. If it wasn’t, it’s safe to consume.

Baked goods
There are more allergen-friendly baked goods popping up in Texas. Every few months, look around for new cafes, bakeries and products in your local food store, café, or farmer’s market for new allergen-friendly options. If you are limited, when traveling research options your family may be able to enjoy as a novel treat.

New Alternative Grain Pastas
Whether you have a wheat allergy or not, there are many new and tasty alternative grain pasta options with few other added ingredients. Many are high in dietary fiber and protein. Some of my favorites: Banza Chickpea Pasta Mac and Cheese, Explore Cuisine Organic Edamame and Mung Bean Fettuccine, and Ancient Harvest POW! Pasta Red Lentil Linguine

Dairy-Free Cheese
Recommendations: Many dairy-free cheeses are around as well, many nut, coconut or soy-based. Many are just ok or are less than appetizing. Some tastier options: Dr. Cow Cream Cashew Nuts Alternative Cheese, Kite Hill Almond Milk Cheese, and Miyoko Fresh Creamery’s Classic Double Cream Chive. There are also many recipes for making your own bulk batches and spicing them to your preference.

Locating Favorite Foods
Many families are unaware their favorite allergen-friendly food companies have store locators on their websites. Check out if your product is in stock by using the store locator, then call to verify stock to avoid unnecessary errands!

Recommended Electronic Resources/Applications
• FARE.org- Food Allergy Research and Education
• Allerware.com- Reading and resources
• AllergyEats- app: input zip code/allergens, gives restaurant options
• My Food Facts- ios app, scan bar code when grocery shopping
• Find Me Gluten Free- ios app: input zip code, gives restaurant options
• Gluten Free Daily- ios app that offers meal plans, recipes, grocery shopping ideas, chain restaurant information (free trial, then yearly fee)
• Tasterie: Allergy-friendly subscription snack company

A Note on Electronic Resources
Be sure you get your information from a qualified source (MD, RD). There are many misguided information sources. No matter what a recipe says about allergen-friendly ingredients, always read food labels.

When in doubt about a new resource, ask your dietitian or allergist about it.
Contributed by Munazza Noor, EGID Research Coordinator

On November 18, 2017, Texas Children’s Hospital hosted its first event dedicated to children and families who have been diagnosed with eosinophilic gastrointestinal disorders (EGIDs). Several experts presented on a variety of topics related to current research and strategies related to gaining a better understanding of EGIDs. The seminar was divided into three sessions: Understanding the characteristics of EGIDs, Strategies used for the management of EGIDs, and Advocacy and current research.

Opening remarks and a brief history of EGIDs was given by Dr. Anthony Olive, Associate Professor of Gastroenterology. He introduced the event speakers, including Dr. Carla Davis, Dr. Sara Anvari, Dr. Deborah Schady (Pathologist), Lauren Kronisch, RD, Founder of the American Partnership for Eosinophilic Disorders (APFED), Beth Allen, and the Executive Director of APFED, Mary Jo Strobel.

A breakout session was led by Ms. Mahima Varughese who facilitated a discussion between parents who share their experiences and provide each other with guidance.

In the last session The Executive Director of APFED, Mary Jo Strobel, spoke to the audience about parent advocacy for their children on a national level. Beth Allen, Founder of APFED, shared her personal experiences about being the parent of a child diagnosed with an eosinophilic gastrointestinal disorder. Closing remarks and discussion about new research opportunities at Texas Children’s Hospital was made by Dr. Carla Davis, Associate Professor of the Allergy & Immunology Department.

Families had the opportunity to taste allergy friendly food samples from several vendors that participated in Family Day for EGIDs 2017. Owner of Awesome Bites Co., Jennifer Thai, presented a variety of her sugar-free, vegan samples at the event. Her baked goods are “reinventing treats” to be allergy friendly so more people can enjoy them. Along with sponsoring lunch for attendees, Abbott provided new flavors of their amino acid-based formula, EleCare, for families to taste. The new flavor samples were well received by attendees at event. EleCare serves as an option for growing children to meet their full nutritional needs. Samples and information brochures for SunButter were available for attendees at the event. Made with sunflower seeds, SunButter is free of the top 8 food allergens and an alternative butter spread for children.

Special thanks to Abbott for providing lunch for attendees and CURED and APFED for providing educational resources.
The culmination of the efforts of the Texas Children’s Hospital Food Allergy Program are now a reality as the Mobile Food Allergy Awareness Cart is at The Health Museum on select Free Family Thursdays, as well as at other locations around the city, including Levy Park in the Upper Kirby District. Developed through a collaboration with H-E-B, The Health Museum, Texas Children’s Hospital, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas, and Texas Southern University, the Mobile Food Allergy Awareness Cart hopes to empower Houstonians with a greater awareness and understanding of food allergies.

This first of its kind outreach was directed with the vision and efforts of the Texas Children’s Hospital Food Allergy Program.

The initial collaboration with The Health Museum began with bold steps by team members, Avina Nguyen, Daisy Tran, Madelyn Wilson, Christina Cowperthwait and Dr. Christina Nance creating digital-based outreach education. The collaboration grew to the level of a consortium with those prominent Houston-affiliated institutions listed.

The mobile cart includes educational tools, activities and videos developed by the Texas Children’s Food Allergy Program team and features food allergy experts and patient families from the hospital.

The mobile cart will provide answers to the following frequently asked questions:

- What are food allergies?
- What happens to your body when an allergic reaction takes place?
- How do you effectively use an Epinephrine auto-injector?
- How can those who suffer from allergies better navigate eating out?
- How to successfully read food labels and find hidden allergens?

To find out where the Mobile Food Allergy Awareness Cart will be next visit http://www.thehealthmuseum.org/FASTcart
In 2017, The Food Allergy Family Network (FAFN) members and leaders were involved in education, planning, advocacy and community involvement. We are delighted to report the various FAFN activities held in 2017.

The first 2017 FAFN meeting was held on March 25, 2017. Dr. Carla M. Davis provided an overview of the various food allergy clinical trials at Texas Children’s Hospital. Dr. Aikaterini Anagnostou presented “The Future of Food Allergy Prevention and Treatment”. Our leaders provided an update on the upcoming food allergy activities in Houston.

On August 5th, 2017, at the second meeting, Dr. Sara Anvari presented “Food Allergies: Keeping Children Safe and School and New Texas Laws”. The FAFN families shared their personal experiences with the educational institutions. The leaders and staff shared effective strategies for parents to consider as they prepare for the child’s new school year.

The FAFN educational forums for parents and the Kid’s Corner for children and adolescents are held on Saturday morning 3-4 times a year. They are designed for families to have sufficient time to talk among themselves, share their individual concerns and highlight their success stories.

The focus of the 4th Annual Food Allergy Symposium was on psychological support for children, adolescents and families living with food allergies. Many of our FAFN members and leaders were at the symposium early and participated as greeters and registrars. Our network members were directly involved during the symposium as timekeepers, small group co-facilitators and presenters during the panel presentation and discussion session. To prepare for the holidays, the FAFN meeting in November focused on Food Allergies and Traveling. Two of our leaders, Sachin Menon and Thuy Tran, presented their knowledge and experiences during their domestic and international travels. Their children’s comments and stories were also shared with the group.

We are looking forward to starting our 2018 planning committee with the involvement of the the FAFN leaders on conference calls and face to face planning meetings.
Awareness is crucial and education is key in making schools a safe environment for your food allergic children. Outreach is an important mission of the Food Allergy Program. This year, we have provided food allergy awareness to approximately 3,000+ individuals consisting of children, adults, teachers, administrative staff, and nurses. Seven schools and community centers invited us to participate in their health fairs. The events allowed for us to engage with the community on a group and individual level and provide educational material. In addition, we presented at three schools on how to manage food allergies. The audience consisted of teachers, school staff, administrative staff, and nurses. The one-hour presentation was followed up with a demonstration on how to use epinephrine auto-injectors and ample time for questions and answers.

The Food Allergy Program and FAFN members participated in the Food Allergy Awareness Week at Texas Children’s Hospital and also in their communities and schools.

The Family Fun Walk at Texas Children’s Hospital was held at the West Campus. Many of the FAFN members and leaders joined Daisy Tran, RN for the day. Education about food allergies and the importance of using epinephrine correctly was provided to the community.

On the state level, Dr. Carla M. Davis presided over the Senate Bill 66 Committee, also known as the Stock Epi Committee, with the Texas Department of State Health Services. She and other members of the committee created rules for Texas Schools to follow when implementing undesignated epinephrine for the 2018-2019 school year.

The Food Allergy Awareness Day at the Texas State Capitol in Austin on April 18th was organized by Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE). Daisy Tran, Avina Nguyen, Lauren Kronisch and Theresa Aldape were invited to travel to Austin, Texas to advocate for our children, adolescents and families living with food allergies. Parents, children, physicians, nurses and advocates from across Texas were also invited to meet with our elected officials to gain support for Senate Bill 579 and Senate Bill 1367. The bills being proposed are to offer liability protection to educational staff using unassigned epinephrine and also initiate free training in educational settings. The entire staff at FARE welcomed everyone on this important day of advocacy and we were successful with our advocacy efforts.

Senate Bill 579 Passed: Private schools can now stock epinephrine auto injectors for use in case of anaphylactic emergency on their campuses. Governor Greg Abbott signed the bill on 5/22/2017 and it went into effect immediately.

SB 1367 Passed: This law mandates that policies and training regarding the use of epinephrine auto-injectors must be offered in public institutions of higher education. This bill went to effect on 9/1/2017.

The success of the outreach would not be possible without the assistance of the Food Allergy Program Staff and Food Allergy Family Network parent leaders. If you would like to arrange an educational session, please reach out to FoodAllergyNurse@texaschildrens.org. Support, information and also share ideas to keep our children and adolescents with food allergy safe in the community. I would like to say thank you to every family who has attended the various activities at Texas Children’s Hospital. The Food Allergy Team have learned so much from each of you including the children and adolescent group. We are always gathering ideas and sharing it with others! For this, we are eternally grateful. Please feel free to reach out to the leader near your home or contact me directly at tmaldape@texaschildrens.org or 832-824-1385.
Food Allergy Program Updates

Food Allergy Research Update
Contributed by Sara Anvari, M.D.

We have been making great strides in the scientific research investigations for the Food Allergy Program and have successfully recruited additional participants for our studies. Furthermore, we have recruited a full-time laboratory technician and 2 new Rice undergraduate research students who will be actively engaged in our laboratory investigations. Ongoing studies are investigating the skin, blood, and stool of children with food allergies to determine the threshold for skin reactivity, the composition of the microbiome (normal good bacteria) and the immune cells responsible for decreasing allergic responses. Recently, our novel findings on the dynamic immunological changes in T regulatory cells occurring as result of peanut oral immunotherapy was accepted for a presentation at the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology 2018 international meeting. These cells are thought to play a key role in causing tolerance to food proteins in allergic children. We look forward to learning more about the immune responses in food allergies to help develop more treatments and get closer to a cure in 2018!

Food Immunotherapy Update
Contributed by Aikaterini Anagnostou, M.D., Ph.D.

The TCH Food Allergy Program has enrolled for 8 clinical trials to help learn more about cutting edge therapies for peanut allergy through oral and epicutaneous immunotherapy and cow’s milk allergy response to probiotic addition to infant formula. There have been over 50 patients enrolled in these trials and our program has helped to gain new insights about the immune system response to these therapies. In order for this program to grow we have hired a new research coordinator and a basic scientist so we can treat more patients and conduct more scientific studies. We hope to grow these programs within the next few years to be able to include children with all food allergies!

We are also very excited to announce that our Food Immunotherapy Clinic at Texas Children’s Hospital, led by Dr. Anagnostou, was launched and all of us are looking forward to be able to offer this innovative new treatment option to food allergic families in our community. We will be starting with peanut immunotherapy and hope to expand to other food allergens in the near future.
Dr. Carla Davis has been appointed the new head of the Section of Immunology, Allergy, Rheumatology and Retrovirology and Chief of the Allergy/Immunology Service in the Department of Pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children’s Hospital.

Dr. Jordan Orange, who currently holds this position, will be leaving Texas Children’s to become the new Chair of Columbia University’s Department of Pediatrics. Until his departure in the Spring 2018, Dr. Orange will work closely with Dr. Davis to ensure a smooth transition of leadership.

Dr. Davis earned an M.D. degree from Duke University Medical School in 1997. She completed pediatric residency training at Baylor and Texas Children’s, followed by postdoctoral fellowships in Allergy and Immunology (2001-2003) and HIV/AIDS Clinical Research (2000-2001 and 2003-2004). She joined the Baylor faculty as an assistant professor in 2005 and was promoted to associate professor in 2015. Davis is certified by both the American Board of Pediatrics and the American Board of Allergy and Immunology. She is an internationally recognized authority and investigator in the field of food allergies.

“Under Dr. Davis’ leadership, I have no doubt that our outstanding programs in Immunology, Allergy and Rheumatology will continue to flourish,” said Texas Children’s Physician-in-Chief Mark W. Kline. “Please join me in thanking Dr. Davis for her willingness to take on this important leadership role.”


Anagnostou K. 'Coconut Allergy Revisited' Children (Basel), 2017


