

Healthcare Sector Diagnostics Division

American Mothers Seriously Concerned About Childhood Allergies, Siemens Survey Reveals

Siemens and Disney Team Up to Raise Awareness About Childhood Allergies and the Importance of Early Diagnosis

Deerfield, Ill., July 20, 2009 – Siemens Healthcare today released new survey results revealing that 85 percent of mothers in the United States believe childhood allergies are a serious concern. Yet, when asked about testing their children for allergies, the survey shows that many mothers know little about the testing options available. Furthermore, more than one-third were not familiar with the accuracy of these tests, despite 93 percent indicating that accuracy was their top concern. The survey of over 1,000 U.S. mothers is part of a Siemens health initiative to raise awareness about this growing epidemic in America.

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America states that allergic diseases are among the country's most common, yet often overlooked, chronic diseases. Allergy affects more than 50 million Americans and is now the third most common chronic disease among children under 18 years old.¹ Depending on geography and lifestyle, the prevalence of allergies can be as high as 40 percent.²

Seventy-five percent of the surveyed mothers believe it is important for children at risk of developing allergies to be tested early. Research indicates that this is a critical step to aiding long-term quality of life. Early identification has been shown to facilitate prompt and effective treatment, and therefore help prevent the progression of allergies to asthma—a disease associated with significant economic costs, health risks and even morbidity and mortality.³

“If allergies go untreated, there is a higher probability that the child will develop additional, more severe symptoms, including asthma,” said Dr. Terrence Zipfel, allergist and otorhinolaryngologist,

East Liverpool, Ohio. “Fortunately, the results we can obtain from a simple blood allergy test can have a life long impact and provide lifelong benefits.”

Allergy testing methods available for children include blood tests, skin patch tests, skin injection and the skin prick/scratch test. The survey indicated that while most U.S. moms (75 percent) know of the skin prick/scratch test, only a half or a third of mothers are familiar with the other options. When questioned about the factors most important to them when testing their own children for allergies, 93 percent of the surveyed mothers cited accuracy as their top concern.

Other important survey findings include:

- An average of 1 in 3 mothers reported that they do not know how accurate the various allergy test results are.
- Of those who responded to testing accuracy, more mothers considered the blood test “highly accurate” (31 percent) compared to the skin prick/scratch test (28 percent), the skin injection test (26 percent), and the skin patch test (9 percent).
- The top three sources mothers said they would consult for information about childhood allergies and allergy testing were: A physician or other health professional (98 percent), health/medical web sites (73 percent), and allergy organizations (39 percent).
- Overall, the surveyed mothers gave online interactive Websites (42 percent) and books (35 percent) the highest marks as “very helpful” to teach their child about allergies.

“The results of this survey reinforce the need for up-to-date, easily accessible resources that can help inform parents about the importance of early allergy diagnosis and the testing options available,” said Donal Quinn, Chief Executive Officer, Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics. “Many parents are not aware that there is a safe, simple and reliable third-generation blood test to aid in the diagnosis of allergies. Siemens is committed to allergy awareness and support for clinicians in providing allergy education for families—the first step in helping children with allergies lead active lives.”

Medical studies indicate that third-generation blood tests for detecting allergies common in children, including peanuts, insect venoms, milk, foods, dust and a host of other allergens, may have higher rates of precision, sensitivity and in some instances safety, than other diagnostic options.^{4,5} Blood tests pose no risk of triggering a severe reaction in the patient being tested.

The reason third-generation allergen-specific IgE assays offer improved sensitivity and reliability is three-fold:

- They are quantitative — able to measure low concentrations of IgE antibodies in a small blood sample.
- They are automated and accurate — similar to other blood serum diagnostic tests.
- Their test antigens are standardized — enabling reliable and reproducible test results.

Siemens and The Walt Disney Company Form Alliance

Furthering its commitment to raise awareness about childhood allergies, Siemens recently announced a strategic alliance with The Walt Disney Company. The two companies have teamed up to teach children and parents about health issues through Disney storytelling. *Mickey and the Giant Kachoo!*, a children's book featuring Disney's Mickey Mouse, will be introduced to clinical laboratory and physician communities at this year's American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC) Annual Meeting from July 19-23 in Chicago.

For more information, please visit <http://www.siemens.com/allergy-disney>. The children's book will be available to clinical laboratories and clinicians in the United States later this year.

The **Siemens Healthcare Sector** is one of the world's largest suppliers to the healthcare industry. The company is a renowned medical solutions provider with core competence and innovative strength in diagnostic and therapeutic technologies as well as in knowledge engineering, including information technology and system integration. With its laboratory diagnostics acquisitions, Siemens Healthcare is the first integrated healthcare company, bringing together imaging and lab diagnostics, therapy, and healthcare information technology solutions, supplemented by consulting and support services. Siemens Healthcare delivers solutions across the entire continuum of care – from prevention and early detection, to diagnosis, therapy and care. Additionally, Siemens Healthcare is the global market leader in innovative hearing instruments. The company employs around 49,000 people worldwide and operates in 130 countries. In the fiscal year 2008 (Sept. 30), Siemens Healthcare reported sales of €11.2 billion, orders of €11.8 billion, and Sector profit of €1.2 billion. Further information can be found by visiting <http://www.siemens.com/healthcare>.

About the Survey:

In an attempt to gauge perceptions about childhood allergies and allergy testing, this survey was conducted among a sample of 1,003 mothers in the United States who have children ages 18 and under living in their household. The survey was fielded from June 25-26, 2009 using an online panel from eRewards. Efforts were made to collect a sample distribution that is representative of the population in each of the four U.S. Census regions. Participants answered questions based upon their current level of knowledge and perception of allergies and testing today. The survey is part of Siemens' ongoing campaign to educate parents about ways to better screen, diagnose and manage allergies.

References:

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