SELF-FUNDED PHD OPPORTUNITY

**Living with allergy during the transition to secondary school**

Allergy, the immune system’s hypersensitive reaction to typically harmless substances, can be severe and lead to a potentially life-threatening reaction or anaphylaxis (Turner et al, 2019). Allergy prevalence is a global “major public health issue” (Sánchez-Borges et al, 2018, p.1), and one of the most common chronic conditions in Europe (Muraro, 2015). The UK particularly faces an allergy crisis. UK allergy rates amongst adults and children are some of the highest in Europe (APPG, October 2021; Sigurdardottir et al, 2021). Allergy can develop across the lifespan but is common in childhood and can become lifelong (Chan et al, 2020; Waserman & Wason, 2001). Allergy prevalence is difficult to estimate, especially among children (Grabenhenrich et al, 2020). Nevertheless, estimates suggest proven and undiagnosed allergy prevalence among UK school age children is high (APPG, 2021), and 10% of primary school age with proven or undiagnosed allergic multimorbidity (Sigurdardottir et al, 2021). For these children and their families, living with allergy has health, economic, and psychosocial costs (Grabenhenrich et al, 2020; Subramanain et al, 2021; Walker, 2007). Importantly, allergy’s adverse impact on children’s educational attainment and school experience is robust (e.g., Champaloux & Young, 2015; Fong et al, 2018; Newman et al, 2022; von Kobyletzki et al, 2017). Consequently, understanding factors influencing management of allergy in children is important (BSACI, nd).

Adult carers (parents and schoolteachers) implement a young person’s allergy management action plan including strategies in the event of severe or potentially life-threatening anaphylactic reaction (NICE, 2020; 2018). Research on ways of avoiding and responding to allergy-related medical emergencies among young people focuses on two transition points (Kaplan, 2022; Sanagavarapu, 2017; 2016; 2012): the transition to school, and from adolescence to adulthood. Yet, UK research on children’s transitions from primary to secondary school is sparse (Newman, 2022) despite known psychosocial challenges this transition represents for children in general (Coffey, 2013).

We are looking for a PhD student to develop a qualitative or mixed methods study to enhance our understanding of the experiences of children living with proven and undiagnosed allergy before and after the transition from primary to secondary school. This multi-disciplinary, collaborative study will run across both UW, NHS, and school environments, offering an opportunity for the successful applicant to develop an applied, impactful research study which could inform policy and practice within schools and NHS Trusts.

**Supervisory Team**

Dr Bere Mahoney, Principal Lecturer in Psychology and Social Science Lead for the Three Counties Medical School.

Professor Eleanor Bradley, Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange for the College of Health and Science.

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