

Inner-Sydney Study to Investigate Causes of Hayfever and Seasonal allergies

The Woolcock Institute of Medical Research will investigate to what extent particular plants in inner Sydney contribute to people's hayfever and allergies.

Following concerns raised by local residents that certain trees, grasses and other plants are contributing to their hayfever and allergies council staff, arborists, medical specialists, allergists, botanists and residents alike have reached a consensus that more and better information is needed.

Jason Sercombe, Allergy Researcher, Woolcock Institute of Medical Research said, "The object of this study is to determine the contribution of pollen and other airborne plant particulates to inner-Sydney resident's allergy and hayfever symptoms."

Mr Sercombe said, "Using the Woolcock's recently-developed "Halogen immunoassay" technique the study will enable us to identify patterns of exposure to different pollens and determine exactly which pollens and plant fragments people are both allergic to and exposed to."

During the study Woolcock researchers will be continuously sampling the air at two city locations and monitoring the personal exposure of selected volunteers during periods of acute allergic symptoms.

Mr Sercombe concluded, "If specific plants are strongly implicated as triggers of allergies, this information will provide a framework for future policies aimed at reducing this hazard and improving the comfort of Sydney residents."

The Woolcock is currently looking for volunteers to participate in the study. They will be given a free allergy test and be required to take part in weekly surveys to monitor their allergies and symptoms over the pollen season (spring and summer of 2006).

To volunteer for this study you need to suffer from hayfever or seasonal allergies and live or work in the inner-Sydney area. Potential volunteers should call 1800 828 717 or email jasons@med.usyd.edu.au.

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