

Distinguished Lecture Series to feature Thomas Platts-Mills

By Suchandra Bhattacharjee

Renowned allergist Thomas Platts-Mills, M.D., Ph.D., will present the next NIEHS distinguished lecture Oct. 14 at 11:00 a.m. in Rodbell Auditorium. The talk, "Epidemics of Allergic Disease 1870–2010: Hay Fever, Asthma, Peanut Allergy, and Now Delayed Anaphylaxis to Red Meat," will be hosted by Geoffrey Mueller, Ph.D., staff scientist in the NIEHS Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Group.

Chief of the [Division of Asthma, Allergy, and Immunology](#)

(<http://www.medicine.virginia.edu/clinical/departments/medicine/divisions/allergy/home-page>)

at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, [Platts-Mills](#)

(<http://med.virginia.edu/faculty/faculty-listing/tap2z/>)

is also a past president of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology. "Dr. Platts-Mills has a towering status in the allergy community that is equally matched by his personality and physical stature," said Mueller.

Platts-Mills has pointed out that dust mite feces contain a potent allergen and can play a causal role in development of asthma. He was instrumental in determining that lone star ticks can induce an allergy to red meat. After receiving a tick bite, a person's antibodies to the [alpha-gal](#) (<http://news.med.virginia.edu/medicinematters/wasomrestriction/public/2012/09/05/why-some-tick-bites-cause-allergic-reactions/>) carbohydrate, which is found in red meat, may rise. Patients with allergies to the carbohydrate have reported effects that occur three to six hours after eating beef, pork, or lamb. By comparison, allergic reactions to most other foods are instantaneous.



Platts-Mills began studying the connection between tick bites and allergic reactions after researching sensitivities to the cancer drug cetuximab, which contains alpha-gal. (Photo courtesy of University of Virginia)

Linked Video

[Watch this CNN video in which Platts-Mills discusses the alpha-gal allergy induced by tick bites. \(1:27\)](#)

Among his many accomplishments, Platts-Mills has published hundreds of peer-reviewed articles, which are cited frequently, and has presented invited lectures and interviews worldwide. He is the first allergist to be named a Fellow of the Royal Society, the U.K. equivalent of the National Academy of Sciences. Also, his work has been featured in newspapers and media outlets, including The Wall Street Journal, "People's Pharmacy," ABC, NPR, CNN, "ScienceNOW," and Discover magazine.

(Suchandra Bhattacharjee, Ph.D., is a special volunteer in the NIEHS Free Radical Metabolism Group)

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