Family Nurse Practitioner Joins OAAC

Chelsea Robinson has re-joined the Oklahoma Allergy & Asthma Clinic practice. Robinson, a certified Family Nurse Practitioner, began her nursing career as a surgical unit registered nurse at The Children’s Hospital on the Oklahoma Health Center Campus. She moved across the street to work as a clinical nurse at the Oklahoma Allergy & Asthma Clinic. After a move to Seminole, she served as the school nurse for Prague and Meeker Public Schools.

Robinson received her bachelor’s degree in nursing science from East Central University in 2014. She completed her master’s degree from Maryville University and completed her family nurse practitioner certification in 2018.

“I cannot wait to start back at OAAC as a Nurse Practitioner. I have many fond memories, friends, and mentors from my time as a nurse here that makes it a natural fit for me to come back after completing my graduate degree. I am passionate about helping our patients feel their best. OAAC is not just a job for me, it is a career,” said Robinson.

Robinson is a native of Seminole, Okla. She and her husband, Dillon, are currently looking to move closer to the Oklahoma City area to split the commute for the two of them. In their spare time, these two love to travel – whether it is the next state over or overseas. She and Dillon have three dogs and two garage cats that fill their lives with laughter and anxiety.

Mold, Grass Can Cause a Miserable Summer

If you are a regular follower of OAAC’s pollen and mold count each Monday through Friday, many days this spring and summer has either had high grass pollen and/or high mold spore counts.

For those with grass allergies, late spring and summer can be a horrible time of year. Constant mowing stirs up grass pollen. These small, light and dry grass pollen grains are released into the air and can travel for hundreds of miles by the wind.

Due to Oklahoma’s record setting rainfall, it’s been a miserable spring-summer with high levels of mold spores in the air. How can you get through these high count days? The first step is to figure out exactly what your body is reacting to as an allergy. After allergy testing, your allergist knows what specific allergens cause your symptoms, and can formulate the right treatment plan.

Grass Allergy

Over-the-counter allergy medicines, prescriptions pills, nasal sprays can help reduce or prevent grass allergy symptoms. Most allergy medicines work best BEFORE pollen season begins. Grass pollen is not visible to the eye but even a small amount of pollen can cause an allergic reaction.

The most common types of grasses that cause allergies include: Bermuda, John- son, Kentucky, Orchard, Rye, Sweet Vernal and Timothy.

What kind of symptoms does a grass pollen allergy cause? Typical symptoms include swelling around the eyes, red and watery eyes, itchy eyes, ears and mouth. A runny nose, stuffy nose and sneezing are also grass allergy symptoms. Patients with asthma can have wheezing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. Eczema patients can have a flare of their skin symptoms.

There are FDA approved treatments to desensitize patients to grass allergens.

Yukon Satellite Clinic Expected to Open Late 2019

The new OAAC Yukon Clinic under construction will serve those who live on the west side of the metro area and western side of the state.
In most of our life celebrations such as weddings, parties, meetings, conventions, etc., events will center on food. Event planning can be complicated when there is a need to safely serve guests with food allergies. With more information in the public eye about the seriousness of food allergies, eating establishments are finding that better communication by all involved in the dining process is necessary. Many times, those with known peanut or tree nut allergies have had reactions but failed to notify the restaurant/food staff of their allergy. Reactions might have been avoided if the server was made aware of the allergy.

Alerting the establishment before ordering is an important step in avoiding allergic reactions. It is possible the staff feel confident they can safely serve guests with a food allergy – however – they may not have had the training or knowledge to do so. Lack of communication with a false confidence can be a dangerous combination.

Some examples of cross contamination that can occur if the staff does not have appropriate knowledge or training:

- Picking nuts off of a salad thinking that will make it safe
- The high temperature of fryer oil destroys allergens
- Taking the same spoon that was used to serve cream soup and using it to stir milk-free soup
- Using the same chopping block to cut up nuts and salad ingredients
- Sharing mixers, pans, etc., in food prep of multiple ingredients

Eating at a catered event is even less in the control of a guest with food allergies. Event planners should ask if people are coming with food allergies and provide opportunities for guests to notify them of any special accommodations. Early communication can assist planners, caterers and other eating establishments plan for safe alternatives when possible. This also gives guests time to work through acceptable and safe alternatives. Inform the catering and banquet staff who is working the event of any specific allergies so sepa-
Asthma affects more than 26 Americans which is more than 8 percent of the population. Many misconceptions exist about this serious respiratory disease.

**Myth #1:** People with asthma think their asthma is well-controlled, when it actually isn’t.

Reality: People who have good solid information about how to control their asthma and reduce symptoms are better able to live the kind of active lives they want.

**Myth #2:** Asthma is curable.

Reality: Asthma is not curable but there are ways to control it that enable asthma patients to do all the things they enjoy. Therapies include medications, immunotherapy and newer medications called biologics.

**Myth #3:** People with asthma should not exercise.

Reality: Exercise boosts heart and lung strength and improves the immune system. Exercise that work well for people with asthma include walking, hiking, and indoor and outdoor biking.

**Myth #4:** Inhaled steroids used to treat asthma are the same as those used to build muscle.

Reality: Steroids used to treat asthma are anti-inflammatory drugs, not hormones.

**Myth #5:** Asthma medications are addictive and dangerous.

Reality: Not true for any asthma medications used in the United States.

**Myth #6:** You can stop taking your asthma medications if you are feeling good.

Reality: You are feeling better because your medications are working.

**Myth #7:** Use quick relief medications if your asthma is under control.

Reality: Those medications should be limited to times for when you are having trouble breathing or preparing to exercise.

For more information about asthma, talk to your OAAC allergist.

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**Food Allergy...**

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rate meals or dishes can be prepared in advance.

It is the responsibility of guests to respond to planners’ requests to alert them of their allergy needs and always follow up by alerting the server and manager about allergies upon arriving at the function. Safe alternatives including outside, packaged food items or a simply-prepared meal arranged ahead of time, should be made available.

Guests with food allergies are valued diners. Event planners can serve them safely and professionally with the appropriate education and planning.

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“**The Allergist**” welcomes your letters, comments or suggestions for future issues.

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Social Media Also Used for Important Announcements

Remember to Follow OAAC on Facebook, Twitter & Instagram

In addition to posting pollen and mold counts each day, OAAC also uses social media to post announcements or educational allergy news updates. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/oklahomaallergyasthmaclinic/, Twitter @okallergyasthma and Instagram @oklahomaallergyasthmaclinic
Mold Allergy

If your allergy occurs during several high mold seasons, you may be mold spore allergic or to other fungi. Mold lives everywhere and upsetting a mold source can spread the mold spores into the air. Outdoor molds may cause allergy symptoms throughout the year. Indoor molds can cause allergy symptoms year-round.

In addition to mold causing hay fever type symptoms, if it reaches the lungs, mold spores can trigger asthma. The reaction can be immediate or delayed leading to nasal congestion or worsening to asthma. Symptoms can get worse in a damp or moldy room such as a basement.

Reducing Exposure to Mold Spores

Limit outdoor activities when mold counts are high. Wear a dust mask when cutting grass, digging around plants and picking up leaves. Use central air conditioning while inside. Be sure to change your filters often. Lower indoor humidity – the goal is to keep humidity below 45 percent below 35 percent is best. If you use a humidifier, clean the fluid reservoir at least twice each a week to prevent mold growth. Both air conditioners and dehumidifiers can be a source for mold.

Prevent mold and mildew build up inside the home by paying attention to any mold in bathrooms, basements and laundry areas and removing it. Reducing dampness is imperative to those with a mold allergy.

Reduce mold in the bathroom by using an exhaust fan or open a window in the bathroom while bathing or taking a shower. Remove bathroom carpeting anyplace where it can get wet. Scour your sinks and tubs at least monthly.

Fungi thrive on soap and other films that coat tiles and grout. Quickly repair plumbing leaks.

Reduce mold in the kitchen by frequently cleaning your garbage pail, refrigerator door gaskets and drip pans. Use an exhaust fan when cooking or washing dishes.

Reduce mold in laundry areas by promptly removing clothes from washing machines. For front loading washing machines, clean the rubber seal and also clean inside the door. Leave the door slightly cracked open when not using the machine. Don’t leave damp wet clothes sitting around. Make sure your laundry has good air circulation.

Increasing the air flow in the home by opening doors between rooms, moving furniture away from walls and use fans if needed, will help with mold reduction. Repair roof leaks and roof gutters to remove leaves and debris. When gutters are full or damaged, this can cause leaking and then lead to mold growth.

Treatments for mold allergy include antihistamines and nasal steroids that are available over the counter. For those with allergic asthma, discuss with your allergist about which medicines are best for you. Allergy shots might also be a consideration to reduce symptoms and medications. Currently no allergy tablets exist for mold allergy.