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## **Dog and cat allergen present in 100% of U.S. homes,** from Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology

MILWAUKEE - Dog and cat allergen is found in all homes in the United States, according to a study featured in the July 2004 Journal of Allergy & Clinical Immunology (JACI). The JACI is the peer-reviewed scientific journal of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI).

Samuel J. Arbes, Jr. DDS, MPH, PhD, and colleagues from Durham and Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, gathered data from the first National Survey of Lead and Allergens in Housing (NSLAH1). The data was gathered from 1998 to 1999 by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The NSLAH1 was a cross-sectional survey of 831 housing units containing 2,456 individuals in a total of 75 locations across the United States. Questionnaires were administered, environmental samples were collected from various rooms and observations were recorded at each household.

The study found that although a dog or cat had lived in only 49.1% of the homes, dog and cat allergen was detected in 100% and 99.9% respectively. The study also found that the majority of U.S. homes have levels that exceed the proposed thresholds for sensitization to these allergens.

The highest concentrations of dog and cat allergen were found on the sofa. In homes with pets, the higher level on sofas could reflect where pets prefer to spend time. However, it could also reflect the site most likely to come in contact with clothing worn outside the home.

Although most U.S. households have neither a dog nor an indoor cat, the question arises why these allergens are found in homes without pets. Explanations for this could be:

Pets lived in the home in the past and the allergens have persisted over time. Dog and cat allergen easily adhere to many surfaces in the home, such as rugs, walls and clothing, making total elimination of the allergen very difficult.

Dog and cat allergen are easily transported on clothing, making them detectable in locations free of dogs and cats. Pet allergens have been detected in a variety of public places such as schools, trains, buses, hospitals, shopping malls, cinemas, hotels, and even in an allergist's office.

Researchers see these findings as a challenge to develop environmental interventions that take into account the community as a potential reservoir for dog and cat allergens.