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J-u-l-y spells relief for allergy victims

By David Williamson

When T.S. Eliot called April "the cruellest month" in his long poem "The Wasteland," it's unlikely that he had allergy sufferers on his mind.

Still, those who are afflicted with stuffy noses, watery eyes and sneezing every spring might be inclined to agree. April is rough on millions of Americans, and this year was worse than most, according to a Duke allergy specialist.

Dr. Dennis Ownby, assistant professor of pediatrics, said that because of unusual weather conditions, trees in North Carolina and neighboring states tended to bloom all at once in 1978 rather than throughout the spring as commonly happens.

"We've seen a number of patients who had more trouble this year than in the past and also a number of people who have never had allergy problems," he said. "There was enough pollen around to act as irritants and cause symptoms even without allergy."

Before ragweed season

While a few grasses are still blooming, relief from pollen has arrived, Ownby said. July is the only warm month when the majority of allergy victims can breathe freely.

"Around the middle of August ragweed and other plants start to pollinate," he said. "By the time we get the first killing frost, people have started turning on their heating systems and blowing around house dust that has accumulated all summer. Periods of prolonged wet weather in late fall and winter cause molds to grow that are another source of allergy for some people."

Only colds more frequent

After the common cold, allergies are probably the second most frequent form

of illness that human beings experience, the physician said. In this country alone, surveys indicate that some 45 million persons are affected.

Ownby said allergies begin in a susceptible individual when certain white blood cells (lymphocytes) first recognize

foreign particles like house dust and then react by producing a protein immunoglobulin known as IgE.

If the same foreign substance should enter the body again later, IgE molecules activate another kind of white cell which releases histamine and related chemicals,

he explained. It is the body's own chemicals that cause the familiar symptoms.

Function uncertain

The physician, whose research is directed toward understanding how the immune systems of allergic and non-allergic individuals differ, said scientists aren't sure what biological function IgE was meant to serve.

"It's hard to imagine that we develop something solely to make us ill," he said. "It appears that IgE is important in defending animals against parasites, and presumably, man has retained that ability because we see the highest levels of IgE in humans when they are infected with intestinal worms."

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Ownby said people can be allergic to just about anything, but the biggest classes of allergens are foods, pollens, molds and inhalants such as animal danders and various dusts. A person's ability to detect something such as animal danders and various dusts. A person's ability to detect something he is allergic to can be phenomenal, the physician said, in the parts-per-billion range.

Detailed pollen counts printed in newspapers or broadcast on radio can be useful to clinical allergists who are trying to pinpoint the source of patients'

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LUNAR LANDSCAPE? — Magnified 10,000 times by scanning electron microscopy, a single ragweed pollen looks more like a frozen moon than one of this country's most irritating allergens. By the middle of August, countless billions of the tiny sex cells will be borne through the air by wind to fertilize ragweed. Allergy sufferers will intercept many of them.

Duke specialist says

Day of non-readers in kindergarten about to end

By Bob Wilson
Duke News Service

The day of the non-reader in kindergarten is about to pass, a university reading specialist says.

"Almost without exception, these children want to learn to read and write," says Dr. Anne H. Adams, a professor of education at Duke. "They approach the task as a form of play."

Adams says there's nothing magical concerning age five with regard to reading and writing, but "unfortunately, some people apparently feel a child should be six years old before he or she can receive reading and writing instruction."

If they can and want to

Adams, who directs the university's Reading Center, says kindergarten "should provide a program that will

afford opportunities for children to learn to read and write if they can and if they wish to do so."

With that position in mind, she and Dr. Judith Connors, director of reading for the Greensboro public schools, wrote "Success in Kindergarten Reading and Writing," just published by Goodyear Publishing Co. in Santa Monica, Calif.

The kindergarten program is a spin-off of Adams' "Success in Beginning Reading and Writing," introduced in 17 Durham first-grade classrooms in the fall of 1976 and now coming into use in several other parts of the country

Incorporated with developmental process

In an interview, she said the kindergarten program "endorses the concept of incorporating instruction with

the developmental process of each child, instead of predetermining a developmental sequence and then trying to make each child fit into it."

Like the elementary versions of the Success program, the kindergarten program doesn't use a basal reader. There is no "See Dick and Jane run" instruction.

Instead, Adams said, the program incorporates the child's vocabulary, printed words from familiar items in the child's environment and a flexible instruction schedule that allows teachers to develop lessons that may differ from day to day.

"Students can improve their reading, writing, speaking and listening abilities almost as naturally as they once learned to speak and listen," the educator said.

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