

Grass pollen allergy research tackles hay fever

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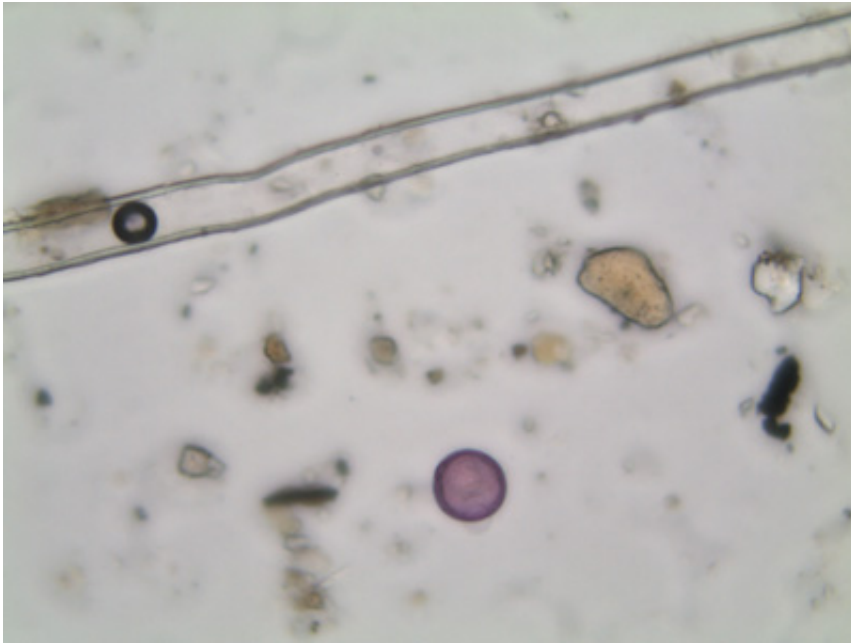


Image of a grass pollen, a major trigger of hay fever says UQ's Dr Janet Davies.

Queenslanders can expect to endure a longer hay fever season than the rest of Australia thanks to flowering subtropical grasses.

This warning comes from Dr Janet Davies from The University of Queensland's (UQ) [Lung and Allergy Research Centre](#).

Dr Davies said grass [pollen counts](#) were particularly high in spring creating hay fever season for sufferers of grass allergies.

"However, in Queensland the grass pollen season continues for longer than spring, due to the presence of subtropical grasses that flower in summer," Dr Davies said.

She also warns that people who suffer from allergic rhinitis, commonly referred to as [hay fever](#), are at greater risk of developing asthma.

Her warnings come ahead of National Asthma Week (September 1-7).

"[Allergic rhinitis](#) and asthma have a significant impact on patient health and quality of life," Dr Davies said.

"There is a need to optimise allergy diagnostics and treatments for subtropical grass pollen allergy.

"Our immune system sees these subtropical grasses, like Bahia, Bermuda and Johnson grass, differently to the cool climate grass pollens such as Ryegrass."

Dr Davies' research is developing new blood tests to diagnose patients who are primarily allergic to subtropical grass pollens.

Together with a team of Australia's leading clinical allergy specialists, Dr Davies is coordinating a survey on the types of [grass](#) pollens patients are most allergic to across different regions of Australia.

"This way we can generate treatment guidelines that can be recommended for those patients whose symptoms cannot be controlled by use of anti-histamines or [nasal sprays](#)," she said.

According to an Access Economics Report in 2007 the annual cost of asthma in Australia was about \$5.6 billion in lost productivity in the workplace and \$808 million in direct [health care costs](#) – that is eight per

cent of Australia's healthcare costs.

Provided by University of Queensland

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