



## SUMMARY

The UK has one of the highest rates of allergic disease in the world, with incidences having increased threefold in the last twenty years. New, more complex and potentially life-threatening allergies are emerging all the time, having a detrimental effect on the education of children at school and the performance of adults at work.

King's College London School of Medicine is leading the fight to turn back this rising allergy tide. One of the largest medical research and teaching centres in Europe, it hosts a Medical Research Council (MRC) Asthma UK Centre in Allergic Mechanisms of Asthma. It opened the UK's first Allergy Academy in response to a House of Lords report that highlighted the educational shortcomings in this increasingly important field.

The Academy's Director, Dr Adam Fox, a Consultant in Pediatric Allergy at the Children's Allergy Service at St Thomas' Hospital and Honorary Senior Lecturer at King's College London. Dr Fox explains, "There's a lack of specialists teaching in this area for all the different healthcare professionals who deal with allergic patients every day. The Academy will be reaching out to a wide audience and aims to serve the full spectrum of people involved in allergy treatment from patients and parents to nurses, dieticians, GPs and specialist physicians."

The Allergy Academy offers a choice of practical courses lasting from half a day to three days, and delivered in spaces ranging in size from small seminar rooms to large lecture theatres. "Each course tends to be attended by a range of healthcare professionals, and one of our challenges is getting a feel for the feedback from different people and different specialties - especially in larger lectures," says Dr Fox.

## SOLUTION

"I was invited to speak at an event where the TurningPoint audience voting system was being used, and I was really impressed by the interactivity it allowed, even in such a huge lecture theatre. We looked at the products available in the market and after seeing a demonstration, we opted for TurningPoint," says Dr Fox. "What really swung us was the integration with PowerPoint. Having to learn how to use new software would be a huge barrier to using this sort of technology, but TurningPoint is so easy to use that it seems to be becoming the industry standard. I know of several teaching hospitals that are already using it."

Although still a relatively recent acquisition for the King's College London Allergy Academy, the advantages of TurningPoint are already becoming apparent. "We have 300 handsets, and the most immediate benefit is the ability to get accurate information from a large number of people quickly," says Dr Fox. "At a recent conference, I used it as an ice-breaker to get people used to the handsets and then gathered valuable demographic details about the audience's areas of specialism."

More than just a simple voting system, TurningPoint allows audience feedback to be collected, analysed and shared in real-time. "People attending our courses come from all sorts of clinical backgrounds and roles," says Dr Fox, "and when we are discussing a particular case, we can ask the audience what they would do next. We can compare the results immediately, which in turn provokes further discussions. We can also take a vote before we discuss a contentious subject, and then another vote afterwards. A graph shows how people's attitudes have changed during the course of the debate."

## OUTCOMES

The Allergy Academy expects more than 1,000 healthcare professionals to attend its courses each year, and Dr Fox anticipates the use of TurningPoint will increase significantly as he and his colleagues explore the full capabilities of the system. "So far the reaction to using TurningPoint has been very positive, and an excellent way of keeping the audience interested in the presentations they attend," he says. "We're careful to collect evaluation data from all our events to ensure that we are continually improving our content and delivery. One of our next steps will be to use TurningPoint for people to evaluate individual presentations instead of filling out feedback forms. In the future, we'll be looking at all sorts of innovative and different ways of using TurningPoint and evaluating its educational effectiveness."