

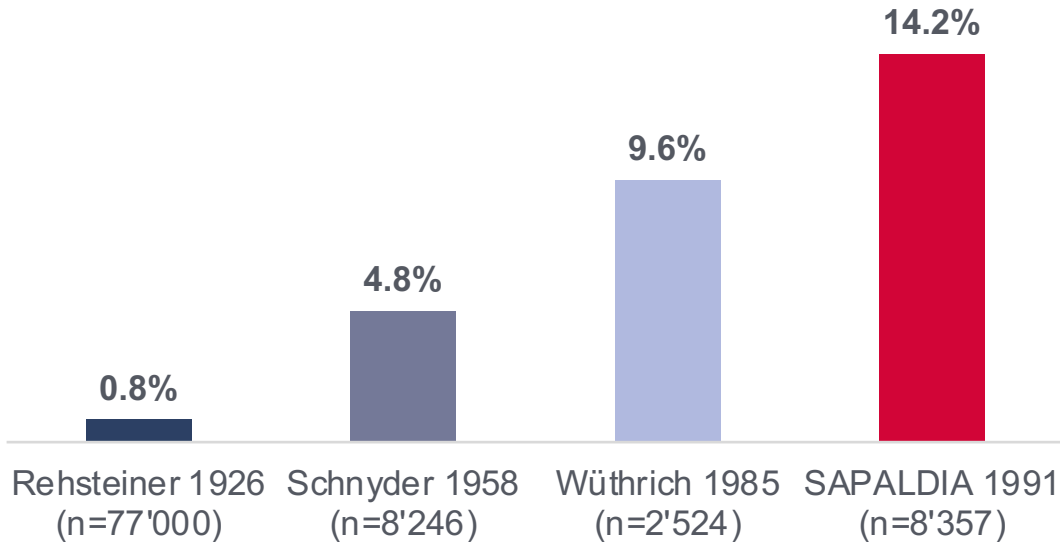
**University  
of Basel**

# **Atopic disorders on the rise**

Prof. Andreas J. Bircher

# Prevalence of hay fever in Switzerland

A steady increase in the prevalence of hay fever was observed.



# Explanations for increasing prevalence

Besides the bias caused by the improved classification of the disease, also environmental factors were thought to play a role.



**Bias due to  
better diagnoses**



**Environmental  
factors**

# Toxin and Antitoxin

With the increasing prevalence of allergies, also the interest in finding treatments was raising.

Toxin



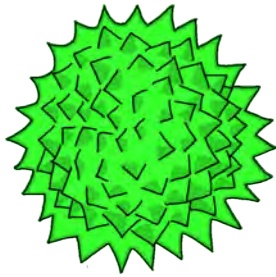
Antitoxin



# Sensitization and desensitization

Depicting a great step forward, desensitization with pollen extracts was the first effective treatment.

## Sensitization

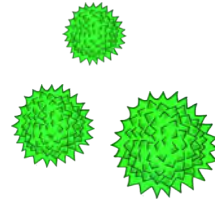


Allergen exposure



Allergic reaction

## Desensitization



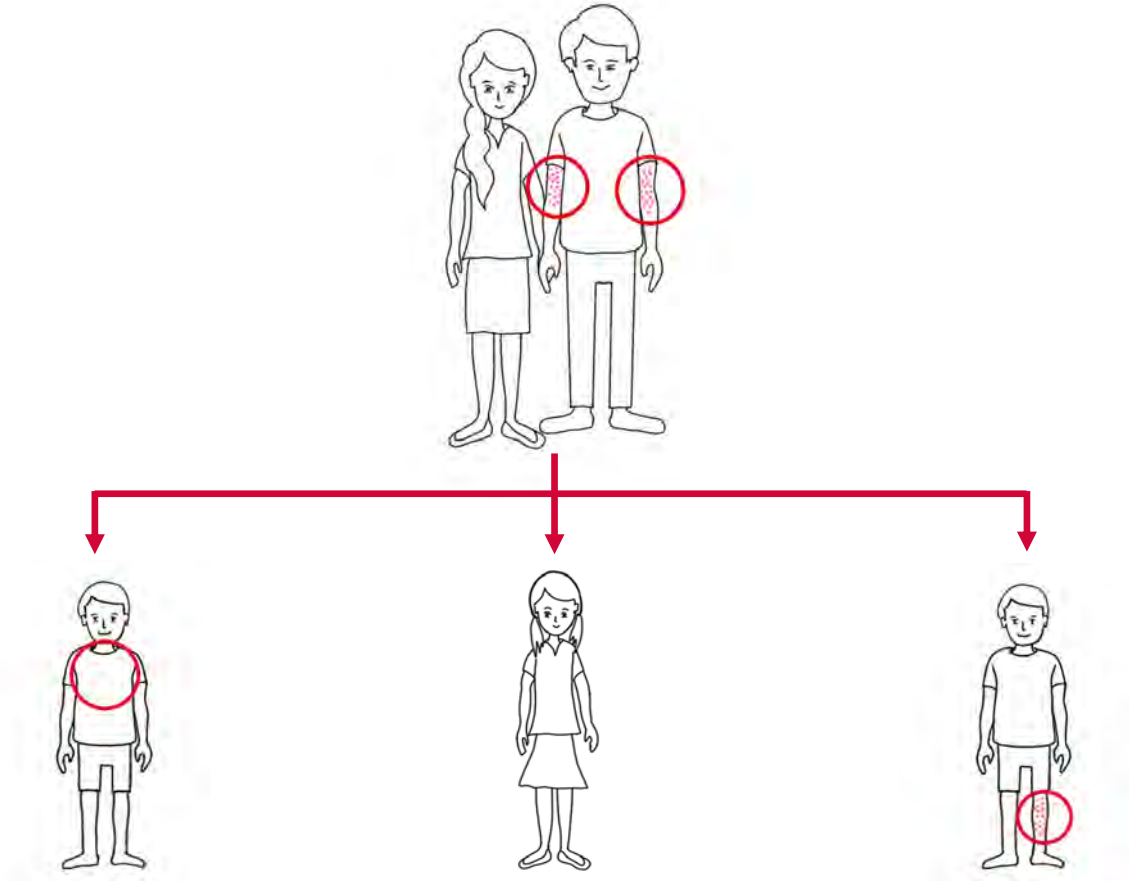
Repeated exposure with increasing doses



Diminishing allergic reaction

# Atopy

Besides the overall rise in allergy prevalence, a genetic predisposition – referred to as atopy – was discovered.



# An epidemic of atopic allergy

What explanations can you think of?

