

In the red zone? Cincinnati-based Allostatis's test looks at health present, future

Business Courier of Cincinnati - by [James Ritchie](#) Staff Reporter **MEDIA**

[Tests offer health prediction](#)

Mark Bowen | Courier

We all want good health, but knowing exactly what that means is not easy.

Doctors can offer a vast array of tests, for everything from cholesterol to kidney function. But such a piecemeal approach doesn't tell a patient much, said Gordon Horwitz, CEO of Cincinnati-based **Allostatis**.

His company is marketing a test he says sums up your health – and predicts its future. It measures a factor called allostatic load, which is a way to look at how stress affects the body's systems.

Horwitz said the test can predict the health trajectory and the likelihood of illness over the next three to five years.

“Where Allostatis has made a massive stride forward is in terms of looking at test results as an interconnected system, which is how the body really works,” he said.

Allostatic load is not actually one test. It is a series of common health tests – such as lipid profile for cholesterol and a measure of waist-to-hip ratio. The key is that Allostatis combines the results into one score, from 1 to 400. The score may fall into the green “safe” zone, the yellow “caution” zone or the red “danger” zone.

The average patient may be most interested in whether heart disease is apt to develop, but the firm is hopeful its test can be useful to the **U.S. Department of Defense** and **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs** in predicting which soldiers are at risk for post-traumatic stress disorder. It is pursuing, with **University of Cincinnati** and **University of Kentucky** researchers, government grants to conduct a long-term study on service members before, during and after deployment.

Horwitz would not release a revenue figure for the firm, which is housed in the **Hamilton County Business Center** and has six employees. It started with \$500,000 in investment



from its four partners. Since then it's taken on 11 additional investors and had an infusion of \$1 million.

Allostatix has made eight sales. Horwitz says the recession has made business slower than expected. However, he's optimistic as the company prepares to begin direct-to-consumer sales within the next six months.

"This business is common sense," Horwitz said. "It's what our parents and grandparents told us: everything in moderation and you'll live a long and fruitful life."

The notion of allostatic load is roughly 20 years old, said Robert Ludke, partner and chief research officer in the company and a professor in UC's family medicine department. He and another partner, Ken Rothe, reviewed scientific literature on allostatic load and chose a set of measures to include in the product.

They decided on 16 laboratory and biometric tests measuring factors from renal performance to pulmonary health to cardiovascular risk factors. Efforts to sell the product began two years ago.

"It can predict any disease, as well as mortality," Ludke said. "What we're trying to do is predict the onset of disease sometime in the future. Basically it's a measure of a person's level of chronic stress, mental or physical, that has built up over time to the point it has some effects on the body."

Though the allostatic load testing generates a single score, Allostatix also provides a detailed report. It discusses the health of various body systems and ways to improve overall health. The idea is for companies to couple the Allostatix product with wellness programs. The cost is between \$50 and \$350 per employee per year.

Mike Schlotman, CEO of **CAI Insurance**, offers Allostatix testing at his company, which has more than 50 employees. He believes it can save money by identifying, at an early stage, workers who are at risk for problems such as stroke or heart attack.

"It's a way for us to tell our employees that we care about them and a way for them to get specific information about their health that they may not be aware of," he said. "Everything (in a standard medical exam) can be looking OK, but what this does is give a very accurate prediction of where a person is heading."

He participated himself and found that, although his diet was good and he was exercising regularly, he was still in the "red" zone. He went back on a statin medication that he had quit, and he lost some weight. He's now closer to the green zone.

Gary Evans, professor in the college of human ecology at **Cornell University**, has studied allostatic load as it relates to children's cognitive development. He said it's a potentially useful tool in measuring general health, but it has its detractors.

“Part of the controversy is that it’s very non-specific,” he said. “It’s a little bit counter to the way we usually think about disease and disorder. It’s saying that if you have lots of different indicators of problems across different systems, then that doesn’t bode well for you.”