

# GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

"WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS"

<http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com>

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## GIHN New Member

**Dr. Sonia Rapaport** lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She is a holistic/integrative family physician who has worked with individuals with illness due to indoor environmental problems.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Rapaport.

**Individuals and businesses can request an application for membership by going to the GIHN website and completing the request form on the [Contact Us](#) page.**

They will receive a copy of our Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy. If they agree with our policies, then they complete the Membership Application and submit it via email. As a reminder, membership requests will not be approved for individuals or organizations that are primarily in the business of selling products.

## U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Takes on Hidden Home Dangers

Home is usually the place where people feel safest, but hidden dangers sometimes lurk there — and the top U.S. housing official told a Nashville audience Thursday that he wants to do something about it.

U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Shaun Donovan said \$104 million in federal grant money is now available to combat home-based health threats that are harming Americans.

Addressing the National Healthy Homes Conference at Music City Center, Donovan told more than 1,000 people that there's more than just Americans' health at stake.

**"Poor housing costs our nation billions annually in preventable health problems," said Donovan. "When it comes to hazards in housing, enough is enough."**

**Many people are unaware of serious dangers that could be invading their home, Donovan said. Radon, carbon monoxide, mold, allergens causing asthma, and lead-based paint can silently cause serious damage.**

"Together we can raise awareness and help Americans help themselves," he said.

Donovan laid out tangible goals for HUD on home safety. They include making information available online and establishing a nationwide standard for what a healthy home should look like.

"Everyone deserves to live in a safe and healthy home," he said.

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.

Click [here](#) to read HUD's press release about the \$104 million in grants available to clean up lead and other hazards in housing

See *Mold in Washington, D.C.* on page 2

## Mold in a Washington, D.C. Apartment (Clare Kelley's story)

In 2012, shortly after returning to D.C. from medical anthropology fieldwork in Peru for her graduate program, Clare Kelley was diagnosed with kidney stones. She had what was supposed to be routine surgery, but instead of bouncing back as expected, she needed an additional four operations that year.

Things kept getting worse from there. That October, Hurricane Sandy hit. D.C. was mostly spared, but the walls of Kelley's apartment on Crescent Place NW in Adams Morgan were damaged, so she told her property manager, who, she says, "kind of brushed it off."

"I started getting sicker and sicker," she says, "and I didn't know why."

"Then it started getting weirder and weirder," she recalls. "My hair started falling out. I'd run my hand through my hair and huge clumps would come out from the roots. I started getting dizzy, fainting."

She saw a doctor, who ran some tests. Kelley failed a visual acuity test meant to determine whether she'd been exposed to neurotoxins. She knew she'd come into contact with something dangerous; she just didn't know what, or where.

"That was terrifying, because suddenly it's like the whole world is threatening," she says.

**Spring rolled around without any answers. Kelley slept in a lofted bed in her apartment, and as the weather warmed, she decided to open the air-conditioning vent on the ceiling, just above her bed. It was covered in mold.**

Mold, it turns out, sits at the center of perhaps the biggest loophole in D.C.'s housing code. DCRA (Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs) inspectors can cite property owners for insufficient natural light in bedrooms, dilapidated sheds, or improperly mounted radio antennas. But if they see mold, the best they can do is cite for related issues like water damage or an unclean surface—issues that landlords can often remedy in advance of a DCRA visit by simply painting over the mold.

**New Mold Law  
Proposed in  
Washington, D.C.**

## Mold in a Washington, D.C. Apartment (Clare Kelley's story)—continued

The city has treated mold like an environmental problem, not a housing or safety issue of the sort that DCRA can cite for.

Kelley struggled to find a doctor who specializes in this kind of reaction to mold. It wasn't until this past October that she came across Dr. Janette Hope in Santa Barbara, California. Hope ran a series of tests. One found that Kelley had toxic encephalopathy, a form of degenerative brain damage. Another found elevated levels of mycotoxins—toxins produced by mold—in her urine.

Mold can affect people as an allergen, an irritant, an infectious agent, or a toxin, depending on genetics and a person's environment.

Unfortunately, mold can be difficult to address. "Right now, if there's no visible dampness and you call in a city inspector, as long as the landlord paints over the mold it will pass inspection," she says. "We see a lot of landlords who paint over the mold and call it a day." Legal action is also difficult: In housing court, the judge will often say that mold isn't covered by the D.C. housing code; in civil court, cases can take months or even years, so the damage is done by the time the case concludes.

That could change. Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh introduced an amendment to the Rental Housing Act of 1985 this month that would make it easier for the city and for tenants to address mold issues. **Under the legislation, passed unanimously by the Council on first reading and awaiting a final vote, the District Department of the Environment would be required to set mold standards consistent with federal mold guidelines. It would also compel landlords to disclose recent mold issues to new tenants, and to hire licensed practitioners to inspect and remediate mold.**

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.

See *New York Supreme Court Ruling* on page 3

## New York Supreme Court Ruling in Favor of Plaintiffs

The New York Supreme Court ruled in favor of plaintiffs in a mold case. The Court does an excellent job of discussing the facts and the literature in a mold case.

Here are a few excerpts, but be sure to read the entire ruling.

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As a preliminary matter, the article *An Approach to the Diagnosis of Acute Transverse Myelitis*, submitted by plaintiffs, expressly identifies *Aspergillus* as a fungal "infectious agent" that causes acute myelopathies such as Keiko's transverse myelitis. Plaintiffs' Ex. 16, at 112-13 and Table 6. Virtually all of the evidence submitted by the parties, including The Bakery's medical and scientific literature, supports the conclusion that indoor mold is a common cause of life-threatening infections in immunosuppressed patients, and Drs. Grant and Kerr opine that Maya was immunosuppressed and predisposed due to her age and immature immune system.

In any event, while much of the medical and scientific articles and position papers submitted by plaintiffs may not "exactly parallel" the facts of plaintiffs' case, "a synthesis" of this literature "reasonably permits the conclusion" that Keiko and Maya were exposed to high levels of mold that is known to produce harmful mycotoxins, and that mycotoxins damage immune and neurological systems, both of which are implicated by Keiko and Maya's illnesses. LaRose, 105 AD3d at 1009.

Specifically, the mold sampling test results from plaintiffs' apartment, and the accompanying affidavit of plaintiffs' mold expert, show that the concentration of *Aspergillus/Penicillium* in the nursery and office of plaintiffs' apartment were more than three times higher than the exterior. This evidence also showed that the interior of the apartment contained medium to high levels of *Stachybotrys*, another toxic mold, while the outdoor samples did not show *Stachybotrys*. According to plaintiffs' experts' affidavits and the medical and scientific literature that they rely upon, these levels could cause significant health problems, including neurological and immune system dysfunction that lead to Keiko and Maya's illnesses.



*New York Courthouse*

## New York Supreme Court Ruling in Favor of Plaintiffs (continued)

Plaintiffs' evidence provides a "'scientific expression' of plaintiffs' exposure levels" to several species of toxigenic fungi — that is, fungi that produce mycotoxins — in quantities evidencing high levels of contamination. Nonnon, 88 AD3d at 396. Thus, plaintiffs "have laid an adequate foundation for their opinions on specific causation." *Id.* The literature upon which plaintiffs' experts rely reasonably permits the conclusion that there is a significant relationship between the mold found in plaintiffs' apartment and immune and nervous system injury and dysfunction, thereby increasing Keiko and Maya's susceptibility to their illnesses.

Click [here](#) to read the entire court ruling.

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## FDA Proposes New Regulations for E-Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has proposed new rules regulating additional tobacco products. The new regulations would bring additional tobacco products under the same rules as cigarettes, roll-your-own tobacco and smokeless tobacco. It would also prohibit the sale of these products to individuals under the age of 18.

Products that meet the statutory definition of "tobacco products" can include currently marketed products such as certain dissolvables, gels, hookah tobacco, electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), cigars and pipe tobacco.

Comments must be submitted by July 9, 2014.

Click [here](#) to read the proposed regulations.

See *Dangers of Toxic Drywall* on page 4

## Report Confirms Dangers of Toxic Drywall

A new report by the ATSDR (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry) confirms that toxic drywall (made in China) caused serious adverse health effects.

The study confirms that families who were exposed to sulfur compounds emitted by drywall manufactured in China between 2005 and 2006 have experienced serious adverse health effects.

Contaminated drywall manufactured in China has been discovered in nearly 4,000 homes across America. Some homeowners have blamed the drywall for health problems such as trouble breathing, skin and eye irritation, nosebleeds and headaches.

The new report, "Possible Health Implications from Exposure to Sulfur Gases Emitted from Chinese-Manufactured Drywall," was issued by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), a division of the Department of Health and Human Services. It describes the laboratory tests and modeling that researchers used to estimate levels of sulfur compounds in indoor air of homes built with toxic drywall.

ATSDR recommends that people who have health symptoms or effects that they feel are associated with problem drywall provide the report to their healthcare provider.

For residents in homes with drywall that meets the Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) problem drywall case definition, the agency recommends following CPSC/U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) remediation guidance.

Several courts have ruled that the Chinese manufacturer of the drywall is liable for damages. Efforts to get the company to pay up are ongoing.

Click [here](#) to read the article and click [here](#) to read the full report.



## Fragrance in the Workplace: What Managers Need to Know

This paper from 2009 has some good information about fragrance-free policies in the workplace.

**Abstract:** It took decades for the workplace to acknowledge the dangers of smoking and to recognize the deadly effects of exposure to second-hand smoke. Once acknowledged, it was a few more years before the workplace became safe for workers from the dangers of second-hand smoke. This paper suggests that fragrance is following the same trajectory.

To date, most of the research on fragrance exposure has been localized in the health care profession and has not received the necessary attention it deserves in the management literature for managers to become knowledgeable about the extent of employer liability and what constitutes a good faith effort to protect workers.

This paper addresses the relevant laws and subsequent court cases and the legal liability they create for employers with employees exposed to synthetic fragrance in the workplace.

Recommendations are also provided for organizations who want to demonstrate a good faith effort and be proactive by addressing fragrance. The final section describes how to develop a fragrance-free workplace policy.

Click [here](#) to read the entire paper.



## Kawasaki Disease Traced to Winds Carrying Unusual Fungal Load

The cause of Kawasaki Disease (KD) has eluded scientists for over 50 years. The disease causes inflammation of the blood vessels in small children that leads to fever, rashes and reddening, and even coronary aneurysms that can cause heart attacks in the young. Whatever the cause, scientists were startled to discover that the agent seemed to be blowing into Japan, Hawaii, and even the western coast of the United States from somewhere in Asia, implying perhaps that a living infectious organism could survive a trans-Pacific crossing.

Now scientists have pinpointed, they believe, the origin of the KD agent in the northeastern part of China based on an analysis of winds around the annual peak of infection. The new findings infer a very short incubation time for KD that almost certainly rules out an infectious cause. However, their findings do not rule out the role of a living organism.

That paradox is possible because bacteria and fungi often produce toxins that can cause disease symptoms of their own. The team tested for an association between inorganic chemical pollutants or pollen and could find none, nor was there much industrial activity in the source region. Instead, the scientists believe it's more likely that a toxin made by a plant, plant-decaying fungus or bacterium, or some other biomolecule is triggering a rapid, destructive immune response in genetically susceptible individuals. "We think it's probably triggered by either a toxin or an antigen," Burns said, "something the immune system can recognize that comes from something that was once alive."

Further evidence supporting the feasibility of a windborne pathogen came in the form of air samples taken by flying into the wind suspected of triggering Kawasaki Disease. **To their surprise, the filters contained an unusually high quantity of the yeast *Candida*, a fungus. It accounted for over 50% of fungal DNA sequences sampled from the filter and was found repeatedly in suspect air.**

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.



*Mold and mushrooms growing in hallway*

## Unbelievable Conditions in Milwaukee Apartment Building

Collapsed ceilings, strong odors...and FUNGUS in the hallways?

These are the conditions FOX6 found inside a Milwaukee, Wisconsin, apartment building! The building's owner has a history of violations at his properties.

**"I've seen a lot of poor living conditions, but this is horrendous," community activist Tory Lowe said.**

The conditions inside 2710 West Juneau Avenue are the worst Lowe says he's ever seen.

"I thought, is this America? Is this something that's going on in Milwaukee, Wisconsin?" Lowe said.

Inside one apartment on Friday, May 2nd, the ceiling caved in. A plastic tarp and towels covered the floor as water dripped from the ceiling into a bucket.

Then in the halls — there is the mold issue.

**"When you walk in, you see fungus growing on the side of the walls, mushrooms coming out of the walls," Lowe said.**

Regine Gholson says she's horrified by what she has seen inside the building since moving in five months ago.

"I think this building should be condemned," Lowe said.

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.

## 10 Things Pesticides Are Doing to Your Body

Pesticides are designed to kill, although the mode of action they use to put the stranglehold on pests varies. Whether it's nerve gas-like neurological disruption, the unbalancing of key hormones, or the stunting of a plant's ability to absorb life-sustaining trace minerals from the soil, none of the chemical interventions seems all that appetizing, especially considering that chemical residues routinely wind up on and even inside of the food we eat every day. Pesticides are also blamed for diminishing mineral levels in foods. Agrochemical supporters tend to fall back on a "the dose makes the poison" theory, assuming that small exposures aren't harmful. Increasingly, though, independent scientists are debunking that belief, even proving that incredibly tiny doses could set a person up for health problems later in life. Luckily, eating organic, less processed foods can cut back on your pesticide exposure.

Here are 10 health problems associated with pesticide-based agrochemicals.

**#1: Food Allergies.** In one of the strangest links to pesticides to date, researchers from Albert Einstein College of Medicine at Montefiore Medical Center in New York City found an association between food allergies and the levels of a pesticide breakdown product in urine. People with high levels of dichlorophenol, a breakdown product of the herbicide 2,4-D and of chlorine used to disinfect tap water, were more likely to suffer allergies to milk, eggs, seafood, and peanuts. It's not clear what could be happening, says Elina Jerschow, MD, MSc, lead author of the study, but she says it may have something to do with the "hygiene hypothesis." Dichlorophenol acts like an antimicrobial and could interfere with healthy bacterial levels in the gut, which, in turn, could upset the body's natural immune reactions to certain allergens in food.

**#2: Memory Loss.** Another review from University College London recently concluded that low levels of pesticides, such as those considered safe for farmworkers who are exposed on a daily basis, cause significant damage to cognitive function—your memory, the speed at which you process information, and your ability to plan for the long term. The review used data from 14 different studies and looked at organophosphate pesticides, which are some of the most harmful chemicals used in agriculture.



## 10 Things Pesticides Are Doing to Your Body (continued)

**#3: Diabetes.** Scientists have been noticing a link between pesticides and diabetes for years. The latest evidence comes out of the Endocrine Society's 94th Annual Meeting, where Robert Sargis, MD, PhD, released the results of a study that suggest tolyfluanid, a fungicide used on farm crops, creates insulin resistance in fat cells. A 2011 study published in *Diabetes Care* found that overweight people with higher levels of organochlorine pesticides in their bodies also faced a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

**#4: Cancer.** More than 260 studies link pesticides to various cancers, including lymphoma, leukemia, soft tissue sarcoma, and brain, breast, prostate, bone, bladder, thyroid, colon, liver, and lung cancers, among others.

**#5: Autism & Other Developmental Diseases.** How do you get autism? The world's leading autism researchers believe the condition develops from a mix of genes and the pollutants encountered in the mother's womb and early in life.

**#6: Obesity.**

**#7: Parkinson's Disease.**

**#8: Infertility.**

**#9: Birth Defects.**

**#10: Alzheimer's Disease.**

To learn more about this topic and to read their tips for preventing these health conditions, click [here](#) to access the entire article.

See *Philadelphia School District* on page 7

## Philadelphia School District Blocks a Federal Study After Health Risks are Exposed

The crisis-wracked School District of Philadelphia has quietly abandoned a federal agency's plans for further study of environmental-health risks in its aging school buildings. An initial review found pervasive dampness, mold or water damage — conditions that may aggravate asthma and other respiratory ailments — but the District has refused to make the complete findings public.

The limited results obtained by City Paper raise questions, including at Bryant Elementary School in West Philadelphia, where a visual inspection conducted during the first study found signs of water-related deterioration in 95.2 percent of the school's rooms. Bryant was where a sixth-grade girl, Laporshia Massey, suffered what her father described as an asthma attack last fall when no nurse was on duty, and died later that day.

In fact, Bryant had the greatest prevalence of such conditions among 36 schools described in a summary dated March 20, 2012. Of that group of school buildings, more than 60 percent— 23 schools — had dampness, mold or water damage in more than a third of their rooms.

The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) Health and Welfare Fund believes that the District shut down a second study because it does not want to reveal the poor state of city school buildings.

On April 11, the PFT and Service Employees International Union 32BJ, whose members include maintenance and custodial staff, filed a complaint — called a Health Hazard Evaluation request — with NIOSH, asking for an investigation of contaminants and poor ventilation.

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.



## House Defense Bill to Address Military Housing with Mold Problems

U.S. Representative Kathy Castor said she added an amendment to the bill requiring a report to Congress on the prevalence of black mold in buildings located on military installations like the Military Support Facility at MacDill. Buildings identified as containing black mold will be added to the construction priority list for building replacement or renovations. The bipartisan amendment was cosponsored by Rep. Richard Nugent (R-FL).

“I am concerned that black mold on the first floor of the Mission Support Facility located at MacDill is not being addressed in a timely fashion,” said Castor. **The amendment requires the Pentagon “to review and address facilities with black mold to protect the health of military personnel on base and save in repair costs,”** Castor said. “I am pleased that my amendment was accepted so we can begin to tackle this issue and raise awareness on the potential for an improved Mission Support facility that serves base personnel, military retirees and local business contractors.”

Click [here](#) to read the entire article.

### Quick Links:

**Website:** <http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com>

**Health Effects:**  
[http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/health\\_effects.html](http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/health_effects.html)

**Position Statement:**  
[http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/files/GIHN\\_position\\_statement\\_Revised\\_12\\_17\\_2012.pdf](http://globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/files/GIHN_position_statement_Revised_12_17_2012.pdf)

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**Next Newsletter: July 1, 2014**

**Working Together for Healthy Indoor Environments**