

# GLOBAL INDOOR HEALTH NETWORK

WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY INDOOR ENVIRONMENTS  
IN OUR HOMES, SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES



August 1, 2015

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## Mold in VA Building Causing Illness

Workers at a local VA office (in St. Petersburg, Florida)) say mold growing inside their building is making them sick, and they say the VA isn't doing enough to protect their health or your tax dollars.

During a recent summer storm, we saw evidence of that leakage ourselves when the I-Team's camera captured water pouring from the ceiling, soaking floors and walls in a stairwell used by hundreds of employees. Click [here](#) to read the article.

## Hospital Works to Correct Mold Problems (after warning from Medicare)

OSF St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Ottawa says it has taken care of its mold issue, which a federal agency warned could hurt patients' health and safety.

On June 29, St. Elizabeth completed a construction project with the intent of addressing the problem, according to the hospital. The project included a complete renovation of all plumbing, finishes, fixtures and other mechanical items in 162 bathrooms, spokeswoman Karen Brodbeck said in a statement.

"Extra diligence was taken in the choice in construction materials to minimize future problems, including the growth of mold," she said. "We're confident that taking into account advances in construction materials and building techniques, these improvements will serve the life of the building."

**The state Department of Public Health, though, said the process continues.**

**"The hospital notified us that the corrections were not completed correctly," spokeswoman Melaney Arnold said in an email. "The facility will be submitting a revised (plan of correction) for us to review."**

**When the state discovered the mold in 2011, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services warned it would stop Medicare payments to St. Elizabeth without an approved correction plan, according to public documents. CMS told OSF officials the problems "limit your hospital's capacity to render adequate care and to ensure the health and safety of your patients."**

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

See *Did moldy building kill professors?* on page 2

## Did a Moldy Building Kill 4 New Orleans College Professors?

Four Southern University at New Orleans professors who died within three months of each other had all worked on the second floor of the Multipurpose Classroom Building. So Cynthia Ramirez found it ironic that SUNO chose to hold a vigil for the dead on the same floor.

Ramirez, a tenured professor of fine arts at SUNO, had her own office in the Multipurpose Building until 2013. That fall, she demanded to be moved, complaining that the building was to blame for her worsening respiratory problems.

But on the morning of the vigil, Feb. 26, 2014, she walked back inside, climbed the atrium stairs and joined a few dozen others to honor the memory of Sudipta Das, 60, Felix James, 76, Guillarne Leary, 72, and Marina Dumas-Haynes, 57.

**When SUNO Chancellor Victor Ukpolo rose to speak, Ramirez burst into tears and left the building. Back at her office, she uttered a phrase that had been running through her mind for days: "SUNO killed those people."**

**The state Office of Facility Planning has since decided to demolish the Multipurpose Building and build a new one in its place.**

Between 2008 and 2013, Das, Leary, James and Dumas-Haynes all had offices and taught classes on the second floor of the Multipurpose Building, a two-story concrete structure with eight classrooms, 30 offices, a large lobby and a 1,000-seat auditorium.

Before their deaths, Leary and Dumas-Haynes had experienced severe respiratory problems, according to relatives and medical records. Faculty and staff say at least 10 others on the same floor complained of similar symptoms -- coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing, asthma attacks, nausea and migraines -- and brought them to the attention of SUNO leadership.



## Did a Moldy Building Kill 4 New Orleans College Professors? (continued)

Some who worked in the building, including Ramirez, say it was contaminated with mold and dust when SUNO reopened it in August 2008, three years after levee failures during Hurricane Katrina flooded it with 4½ feet of water. They say SUNO did little to fix the problem over the next five years, despite numerous complaints to the administration and its facilities management department.

"We told them over and over: 'It's not safe in here,'" said Ramirez, who serves as vice president of SUNO's Faculty Senate. "But people had to die before anything was done."

Based on a review of indoor air quality test results the state provided to NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune, several nationally recognized mold experts say the building was not safe at the time it was reoccupied in 2008. They say the presence of certain mold spores in the test results should have indicated to inspectors that the building was unfit for use.

Leading researchers on the health effects of mold exposure say conditions inside the Multipurpose Building may have played a role in the deaths of the four SUNO professors.

**In February 2014, SUNO moved those with offices inside the Multipurpose Building to a new temporary building on the university's south campus. By the end of that month, Leary, Das, Dumas-Haynes and James were all dead.**

Click [here](#) to read this full article. To continue with the 3-part series, here are the links for [part 2](#) and [part 3](#).

See *Indoor air quality in hospitals* on page 3

## Indoor Air Quality in Hospitals

Hospitals and health care facilities must comply with ASHRAE and other regulatory standards with respect to air change rates, humidity requirements, and pressurization. ASHRAE Standard 62.1 is the most commonly referenced standard to meet appropriate HVAC system design. Indoor air quality (IAQ) encompasses a wide variety of factors: temperature, humidity, quantity, presence of chemicals and other contaminants, and the quality of outdoor air brought inside are typical metrics used to define IAQ. The concept of IAQ is especially important with regard to the environments within hospitals and other health care facilities. The patients within the facility and the staff caring for those patients are all directly impacted by the quality of air in the building. IAQ is also a component of sustainable concepts that are incorporated into the design of such facilities. Improved IAQ is a viable goal for overall improvements in building occupant satisfaction at hospitals and other health care facilities.

**Medicare and Medicaid account for 55% of all care provided by hospitals, and nonprofit hospitals are required to accept Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement benefits. In 2008, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) refused to offer reimbursement for some nosocomial infections (infections that were acquired in a hospital), which had a direct impact on the finances of health care organizations. In 2012, they included additional nosocomial infections to the list of maladies that would not qualify for reimbursement.**

As a result, hospitals and other health care facilities have focused on measures to reduce their nosocomial infections and increase patient comfort, with IAQ being one of the components.

**To improve IAQ, engineers and designers must understand the components that can impact it. For health care facilities, these components typically fall into four major categories: the patients, the staff, the building, and the outdoor environment. By looking at each of these categories in depth, designers can develop methodology to ensure detriments to IAQ are addressed and minimized.**



## Indoor Air Quality in Hospitals (cont'd)

Hand-washing, the use of gloves, and the proper disposal of soiled gloves, bandages, and dressings are important components of a facility's hygiene protocol that, when not followed, introduce the potential to spread the contaminants generated by the patient. A facility's staff doesn't just include those with direct patient interaction. Housekeeping employees responsible for keeping the building clean is another source of IAQ contaminants based on their methods and use of chemicals for cleaning and disinfecting. Carting of trash and other waste products can offer a source of particulate contamination to the air if the waste is not covered properly. The chemicals used for cleaning can introduce objectionable odors into the indoor environment. If the cleaned surfaces don't dry properly, they can provide an opportunity for mold growth.

The building itself can offer other sources detrimental to good IAQ. The ductwork used to distribute air throughout the facility can become dirty over time and trap various contaminants such as dust, dirt, and even biological organisms. Moisture from HVAC humidification can condense within the duct system. Moisture can also seep into various building components from breaches in the building envelope, concealed leaks, or even overspray from the cleaning process. This moisture can instigate mold growth over time, which is often undetected until the problem becomes substantial.

Insufficient (where not enough filtering is provided) or deficient (where filters have not been properly replaced when necessary) filtration within the air-handling systems also offer the opportunity for various contaminants to be distributed via the airstreams throughout the building.

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

## Antibiotics Causing Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis

**BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE:** Recent evidence has linked childhood antibiotic use and microbiome abstract disturbance to autoimmune conditions. This study tested the hypothesis that antibiotic exposure was associated with newly diagnosed juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA).

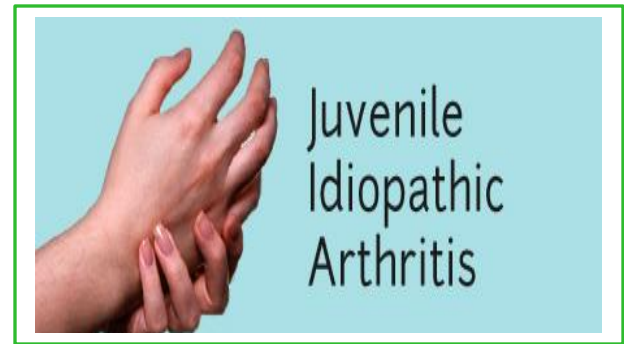
**METHODS:** We performed a nested case-control study in a population-representative medical records database from the United Kingdom. Children with newly diagnosed JIA were compared with age- and gender-matched control subjects randomly selected from general practices containing at least 1 case, excluding those with inflammatory bowel disease, immunodeficiency, or other systemic rheumatic diseases. Conditional logistic regression was used to examine the association between antibacterial antibiotics (including number of antibiotic courses and timing) and JIA after adjusting for significant confounders.

**RESULTS:** Any antibiotic exposure was associated with an increased rate of developing JIA (adjusted odds ratio: 2.1 [95% confidence interval: 1.2–3.5]). This relationship was dose dependent (adjusted odds ratio over 5 antibiotic courses: 3.0 [95% confidence interval: 1.6–5.6]), strongest for exposures within 1 year of diagnosis, and did not substantively change when adjusting for number or type of infections. In contrast, nonbacterial antimicrobial agents (e.g., antifungal, antiviral) were not associated with JIA. In addition, antibiotic-treated upper respiratory tract infections were more strongly associated with JIA than untreated upper respiratory tract infections.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Antibiotics were associated with newly diagnosed JIA in a dose- and time-dependent fashion in a large pediatric population. Antibiotic exposure may play a role in JIA pathogenesis, perhaps mediated through alterations in the microbiome.

Click [here](#) to read the abstract.

Click [here](#) to read an article regarding this new research paper.



## Judge Slams NYCHA Officials for Not Showing up for Hearing on Toxic Mold in Public Housing

A judge overseeing NYCHA's flailing efforts to clean up its toxic mold problem ripped into agency officials for being no-shows at a hearing Friday.

A lone NYCHA lawyer showed up, but none of the top brass appeared in Manhattan Federal Court to answer why they've failed to live up to a 2013 promise to abate mold in decrepit apartments.

**"Why wouldn't some policy-making, decision-making official of NYCHA be here?" fumed Judge William Pauley. "I can't believe they have more important things to do."**

In December 2013, NYCHA signed a consent decree, promising to "effectively remediate" mold infestation deemed "simple" within seven days and mold deemed "complex" within 15 days.

Months later, tenants who sued say in one-third of these so-called "remediations," the mold returns. Lawyers for the tenants also say NYCHA is now interpreting the decree to give themselves more time to fix things.

In the Friday hearing, Pauley also dubbed as "gamesmanship" NYCHA's delays in turning over required and meaningful reports on the status of the cleanup. NYCHA has claimed that it's completely fixed the mold problem of the lead plaintiff, Maribel Baez, but in court Friday, Baez stood up to say, "There's still moisture coming back."

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

See *Glenwood Middle School mold* on page 5



## Glenwood Middle School Teachers Report Mold-related Health Problems

In the weeks since Superintendent Renee Foose acknowledged that Glenwood Middle School has had a recurring mold problem, teachers and parents of students have started to come forward with stories of health issues that they believe were caused by mold in the building.

One teacher told of dizziness and heart palpitations at work. Another had breathing problems that led to an emergency room visit. Multiple teachers reported students with nosebleeds, sinus infections and bronchitis. A parent said a mysterious illness that caused her son to miss 16 1/2 days during his sixth-grade year was finally starting to make sense.

The stories paint a picture at odds with assurances from Howard County Public School System officials, who say the middle school's problems have been minimal and were promptly remedied.

Meanwhile, buzz about the mold is growing among community members. A Facebook page called "Mold at Glenwood Middle School" had more than 280 likes as of Tuesday night and is active with comments from parents and teachers.

While parents and teachers share stories and concerns online and with the school system, two Glenwood Middle School para-educators have filed workers' compensation claims for what they argue are health issues caused by mold.

An August 2013 visit to the school found that the humidity in sample classrooms ranged between 65.9 and 79.3 percent, higher than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's recommended relative humidity levels of 30 to 50 percent to prevent mold growth.

Testing also revealed that basidiospore levels were higher in one classroom compared with the outdoors, while two other classrooms had elevated levels of penicillium and aspergillus relative to outside.

HCPSS officials have responded by pushing up a \$3 million project to replace Glenwood Middle's heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.

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



## FAA Posts List of Demands Before TIA Tower Reopens

- Air traffic controllers are still not in the control tower at the Tulsa International Airport.
- The FAA demanded 48 repairs to be made to the tower.
- Airport officials said they have been actively addressing issues since 2013.

The control tower at the **Tulsa International Airport (TIA)** was still closed Monday night, despite the fact that the reason it was evacuated two weeks before was already taken care of.

**A letter from the FAA to TIA officials demanded 48 repairs to be made to the tower.**

**Eight of those repairs pertained to water leaks and water damage and are mandatory repairs before the controllers return to the permanent tower.**

TIA Spokeswoman Alexis Higgins said the 60-year-old facility is a challenge to maintain, and sent a spreadsheet showing the airport have been actively addressing issues with the tower since 2013, spending \$230,000 on it.

Operations remain in a temporary tower, but TIA officials said they want to reopen the runway this week.

Controllers will go back inside when the FAA and the Air Traffic Controllers Union decide that the airport has made progress on the list of concerns.

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

## Physicians Testified for Tobacco Companies (Paid to Deny the Truth)

Despite scientific evidence to the contrary, a small group of otolaryngologists have repeatedly testified, on behalf of the tobacco industry, that heavy smoking did not cause the cancer in cases of dying patients suing for damages, according to a study by a Stanford University School of Medicine researcher.

“I was shocked by the degree to which these physicians were willing to testify, in my opinion in an unscientific way, to deny a dying plaintiff — suffering the aftermath of a lifetime of smoking — a fair trial,” said Robert Jackler, MD, professor and chair of otolaryngology-head and neck surgery, referring to the physicians cited in the study as a “pool of experts willing to say over and over again that smoking didn’t cause cancer.”

The study was published online July 17 in *Laryngoscope*.

Jackler, who holds the Edward C. and Amy H. Sewall Professorship in Otorhinolaryngology, conducted a year and a half of research, which included reading through thousands of pages of publicly available, expert-witness depositions and trial testimony. He then reviewed the scientific literature to see if testimony by expert witnesses for the tobacco industry was supported by evidence.

Jackler said that a physician serving as an expert witness has an ethical obligation to interpret the scientific data in a fair and balanced manner.

The literature, he found, repeatedly repudiated the testimony. “My study found they used scientifically invalid methods to support their testimony,” he said.

The study reports that six board-certified otolaryngologists were paid by one or more of the tobacco companies R.J. Reynolds, Phillip Morris and Lorillard to serve as expert witnesses. These physicians gave testimony that indicated a multiplicity of environmental factors, ranging from exposure to cleaning solvents to the consumption of salted fish to the use of mouthwash, were more likely to have caused the plaintiffs’ head and neck cancers than years of heavy smoking.

Experts for the Tobacco Industry Denied the Dangers of Tobacco

## Physicians Testified for Tobacco Companies (continued)

The cases occurred between 2009 and 2014. One physician said he was paid \$100,000 to testify in a single case. Another admitted that her opinion was written by tobacco company lawyers and then approved by her. Still another rejected reports from the Surgeon General as authoritative sources.

**The scientific literature demonstrates that tobacco directly contributes to head and neck cancers at a greater than 50 percent likelihood, Jackler said.**

**“[The tobacco industry identifies] the best experts that money can buy, [trains] them in their well-honed narrative to manufacture doubt in the minds of the jury and [makes] use of them over and over in case after case,” the study said. Given the ethical traditions of medicine, it seems likely that these physicians believe their well-compensated testimony on behalf of tobacco companies occurs in the shadows, out of view of their families, friends and professional colleagues, Jackler said.**

Click [here](#) to read this article.

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***GIHN note:*** Many of the “experts” used by the tobacco industry to deny the health effects of tobacco have been used by the insurance industry to deny the health effects of mold.

To learn more about these ***naysayers***, go to our website. Click [here](#).

## Controller report finds unsafe conditions in 20 public schools (Pennsylvania)

City Controller Alan Butkovitz has released a report on some of Philadelphia's public school buildings that uncovered hazardous conditions, including exposed asbestos, electrical and fire dangers, rodents, non-working toilets and water damage.

"The presence of improperly encased asbestos material could pose a serious health risk to anyone who comes in contact with it," Butkovitz said. "The school district needs to have a licensed asbestos abatement professional investigate and remove the potential danger."

Officials visited 20 schools from November 2014 to March 2015. Ten of the them were previously inspected, and 10 of the buildings were not. These sites were selected from the school district's website and represent about 7 percent of the district's schools. Of the 20 schools selected for inspection, all contained more than one unsafe condition. Butkovitz said the school district needs to address these issues while students are on summer break.

At Francis Scott Key Elementary School, investigators found a pipe containing exposed asbestos in a hallway traveled by students and staff near the lunchroom. Other findings from the schools inspected included the following: **95 percent had water damage, including mold and flooded mechanical rooms**; 75 percent had fire safety hazards, including expired fire extinguishers and blocked fire exits; and 70 percent had electrical hazards, including exposed live wires and an open electrical panel.

"We understand the school district is financially strained and there are many funding priorities," Butkovitz said.

"Many of these conditions are low-cost items that could be completed by the school maintenance staff. The school district needs to provide a safe, sanitary learning environment for everyone, including our great teachers who must endure these conditions daily. The longer these low-cost items go unattended, the more severe and costly they will become."

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



## State Farm at Risk of Massive Class Action Lawsuit for Fraud

A recent court decision favoring whistleblowers who sued State Farm Fire and Casualty Co. for fraud in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina has opened the door for a potential class-action lawsuit against the insurer, attorneys involved with the case say.

The 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a jury verdict Monday in favor of Cori and Kary Rigsby, two sisters that sued State Farm on behalf of the government after witnessing the carrier attempt to shift claims to the federal flood insurance program that should have been paid by State Farm.

Monday's decision allows the Rigsbys and the government to seek more evidence of widespread fraud against the National Flood Insurance Program.

That could mean additional litigation woes for State Farm, August Matteis, a lawyer for the Rigsbys said.

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

Click [here](#) for another article on this court ruling.

## EPA Working toward Ban on Chlorpyrifos (dangerous pesticide)

The Environmental Protection Agency plans to ban one of the most toxic pesticides allowed in the U.S. unless the companies that sell it restrict its use.

Environmental groups have been pushing the EPA to ban chlorpyrifos since 2007. And on June 30, in response to an order from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the EPA filed a report saying it would ban the chemical unless makers “agree to take necessary action, i.e., amending the product labeling of chlorpyrifos products, to address unsafe drinking water exposures.” (Tougher labeling would carry legal weight.)

Use of chlorpyrifos has declined over the last few decades — largely due to the increased use of insect-resistant GM corn. But farmers still spray between 5 and 10 million pounds of the stuff every year. It’s used on a wide variety of crops and on golf courses.

**Chlorpyrifos is an organophosphate — one of the more toxic pesticide classes still in use.**

**Unlike some pesticides that target specific pests, chlorpyrifos interferes with the functioning of an enzyme that is essential for most animals, including humans.**

It can be absorbed through the skin. It’s toxic to birds, bees, fish, and earthworms. And it can linger in water.

Several studies found an association between elevated organophosphate levels in the womb and neurological deficits later on in life.

**By April 15, 2016, the EPA will publish its new rules, limiting or prohibiting the use of chlorpyrifos.**

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



## Mayor Orders Apartment Complex to Clean Up Mold (Kentucky)

Owensboro Mayor Ron Payne is ordering an apartment complex owner to clean up a mold problem.

Jennifer Matthews has been living in Lee Manor Apartments on Fourth Street for the past four years.

Last year, Matthews says she noticed mold forming around her vents.

She tells 14NEWS the problem has gotten so bad that it’s making her sick.

After fighting with management for the past year, she went to city leaders for help.

The mayor responded by asking for a code enforcement officer to meet with all residents about possible mold issues.

He also wants Matthews to come back to the next city commission meeting if it’s not fixed.

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

### Quick Links:

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

**Health Effects:**  
<http://www.globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/health-effects>

**Position Statement:**  
<http://www.globalindoorhealthnetwork.com/GIHN-position-statement>

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**Next Newsletter: September 1, 2015**