

THE



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KEVIN C. COX/GETTY IMAGES

A Master for the fifth time

Tiger Woods makes his putt on the 18th green to win the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Georgia, on Sunday afternoon. It had been 14 years since he last won the Masters and nearly 11 years since his last major victory, at the 2008 U.S. Open at Torrey Pines. Woods won his fifth green jacket, and 15th major overall. **COVERAGE, SPORTS PG 1**

Trump revisits migrant move

'Sanctuary cities' as destination among options, aide says

By FELICIA SONMEZ
AND MIKE DEBONIS
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said Sunday that President Donald Trump has asked his administration to take another look at a plan that would send migrant detainees to "sanctuary cities," in retaliation against Trump's political opponents.

The proposal, first reported by The Washington Post last week, has been rejected twice in the past six months over legal, budgetary and other concerns.



Graham

"Certainly, we're looking at all options," Sanders said on "Fox News Sunday." She said the proposal is not an "ideal solution,"

but that if Democrats refuse to negotiate with Trump on border security, the White House is prepared to "put some of those people into their communities" and see how the Democrats react.

In an appearance on NBC News' "Meet the Press," White House counselor Kellyanne Conway accused an "unserious Congress" of not taking tougher action to stop migrants from crossing into the country.

"The Republicans failed to do their job when they were in charge, no doubt," she said. "And the Democrats now are failing to come together in the House."

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., meanwhile, said Sunday that he is planning to introduce a new immigration reform package after the Senate returns from recess, although **See TRUMP, page 8**



KIM HAIRSTON/BALTIMORE SUN

The focused ultrasound researchers at the University of Maryland School of Medicine include Dr. Dheeraj Gandhi, left, the director of interventional neuroradiology, and Dr. Howard Eisenberg, chair of the neurosurgery department.

Medical trial uses focused ultrasound to ease suffering

Researchers at University of Maryland School of Medicine are testing technique to treat neuropathic pain

By SARAH MEEHAN
The Baltimore Sun

Steroid injections, nerve stimulators and spinal fusions were no match for the chronic pain in Tammy Durfee's left side — never mind the "searing-hot poker" sensation that would jab her leg without warning. After a decade searching for relief, a four-hour procedure in Baltimore put her pain to rest.

Durfee, of Higginsville, Missouri, was the first U.S. patient to be treated for neuropathic pain using focused ultrasound in a medical trial being conducted by University of Maryland School of Medicine researchers. Just as a magnifying glass can concentrate sunlight to burn holes in leaves, focused ultrasound concentrates sound waves to singe a small area of the brain, preventing neurons from overreacting and triggering pain.

Durfee's treatment is part of a broader trial in which Maryland medical school researchers are studying the use of focused ultrasound on neurological conditions including essential tremor, Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders. Proponents of focused ultrasound expect the non-invasive therapy could become a mainstream treatment for dozens of conditions ranging from cancer to Alzheimer's disease in the years ahead.

Often associated with pregnancy sonograms, ultrasound is a technique that sends sound waves through the body, often to create medical images. Focused ultrasound pinpoints the sound waves to a specific area to burn tissue.

The technique looks to be a promising treatment for neuropathic pain, a fairly common condition that is notoriously difficult to treat. The sensation is caused **See PAIN, page 9**

Mold issue pains renters

After wettest year, advocates seek more protections for low-income tenants

By YVONNE WENGER
The Baltimore Sun

After Baltimore's wettest year on record, housing advocates are seeking more protections for low-income tenants battling mold in their rental homes — and a city councilman is calling for a hearing on the problem.

Last year's rainfall exacerbated damp conditions, breeding a perfect atmosphere for mold, according to advocates, officials and renters. Such growth had long been a bane to poorer tenants renting older homes in neighborhoods where health data shows residents suffer disproportionately from asthma.

The rainy year caused significant trouble across the region: Mosquitoes multiplied to three times the normal number in Maryland, tomatoes cracked and sunflowers rotted and some farmers lost entire crops, and hundreds of students living on campus at the University of Maryland, College Park, were displaced by mold infestations.

In Baltimore, City Councilman Bill Henry plans on Monday to call for an informational hearing. Advocates want air-quality testing and requirements to treat the fungus like lead paint when it threatens a person's health.

Mold is among the top three problems Baltimore tenants report, along with pests and trouble with utility connections, according to Zafar Shah, an **See MOLD, page 9**

SUMMARY OF THE NEWS

MARYLAND

HOUSE SPEAKER: Republicans in Maryland's Democratic-controlled House of Delegates are attempting to play a key role in electing the chamber's next speaker, saying they will vote in a bloc for one of three Democrats contending for the office, potentially taking a decisive role in the contest to name the successor to the late Speaker Michael Busch. **NEWS PG 2**

GREEN ENERGY MISGIVINGS: Some environmentalists fear that the General Assembly's bill to increase green energy to 50% in Maryland by 2030 will only magnify a wrinkle in state policy that rewards carbon-emitting trash incinerators and paper mills with millions of dollars in green energy subsidies that are funded through energy bills. **NEWS PG 2**

NATION & WORLD

BARR'S 'SPYING' REMARK: When Attorney General William Barr told a Senate subcommittee last week that "I think spying did occur, yes" on President Donald Trump's campaign in 2016, he left with those who have defended the FBI complaining that the attorney general had legitimized an outlandish conspiracy theory. **NEWS PG 4**

DEADLY STORMS: Powerful storms swept across the South on Sunday after unleashing suspected tornadoes and flooding that killed at least eight people. **NEWS PG 4**

TODAY'S WEATHER

CLOUDY, WITH A SHOWER

62
HIGH40
LOWSunny on Tuesday **SPORTS PG 12**

inside

bridge sports 8 • lottery news 3 • horoscopes news 7 • obituaries news 8 • opinion news 10
puzzles sports 8, 11 • tonight on tv sports 11 • comics sports 10 • classified sports 8



Advocates point to mold issues for renters

MOLD, From page 1

attorney at the Public Justice Center. The nonprofit, representing tenants in landlord disputes, wants Baltimore's housing code to give tenants the right to air-quality testing, transparency in the repair process and alternative housing when mold is being removed.

"The renters in this city know there is a really terrible problem, and not just because of the rain, but the continued deterioration of these properties," Shah said, adding that two of his clients photographed mushrooms growing inside their homes.

"Last year, it became clear this wasn't isolated to a few bad properties that might have structural defects. Properties with minor roof or sealant issues with windows by October had major problems with mold."

Shah said "rent escrow court" filings — where tenants ask judges to set aside rent payments until landlords fix serious hazards — rose last year along with precipitation. The total for 2018 was 1,341, at least a 10-year high, and an increase of one-third over 2017. Mold can cause rashes, trigger asthma attacks and, in rare and extreme cases, result in death if a person's airways swell and become restricted, said Ruth Ann Norton, president of Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, a national nonprofit which advocates for healthy, safe and energy efficient homes from its offices in Baltimore and a handful of other cities. And it is not always possible to spot on routine inspection, she said. The fungus can grow behind drywall when there are leaks and moisture can cause it to line the inside of a chimney or grow inside a ventilation system, spreading spores throughout the house.

Renters in Baltimore point to their struggles with water — and attendant mold concerns — this year. Take, for example, two adjacent, century-old East Baltimore rowhomes in the 1600 block of Aisquith Street.

Tyisha Fulton lived there with her four children, including her infant daughter, who has had trouble breathing and needs treatment for asthma symptoms. Inspection records for Fulton's house, provided by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, show multiple violations, including roof leaks, a mice infestation and fungal growth behind sheet rock.

Ultimately, Fulton said, she was granted an emergency Section 8 voucher from the housing authority to move the third time she had a carbon monoxide leak.

"I did not know this house had so many problems," said Fulton, 30, who moved last month.

Next door, Shateara Diggs and her sons, 6 and 8, have suffered cold symptoms since moving in last summer. A doctor's letter links



KARL MERTON FERRON/BALTIMORE SUN

Tyisha Fulton stands among bags filled with possessions, kissing her 6-month-old daughter Ayla Wilson. Fulton was granted an emergency voucher to move after the home failed a safety inspection.

her illness to mold in the house; he prescribed steroids and an inhaler. Diggs said her landlord's crews chipped mold from pipes and cleaned and repainted walls — but it persisted. Inspection records list water damage, leaks, inadequate air circulation and a "strong mildew smell." Yet no mold. Norton said requiring air quality testing could have helped pinpoint if mold was growing.

"I am reaching out to everyone possible, and I am not being heard, or they just don't care," Diggs, 26, said. "I had to get myself together and say, 'Me and my kids got to get out this house.'"

Last month, housing officials issued her a voucher to move, citing recurring water in the basement.

Property records show both houses are owned by Wadham Properties Holdings in Towson. Multiple voicemails, emails and text messages from The Baltimore Sun seeking comment for this article were not returned.

The housing authority is conducting quality control inspections for the properties. The Section 8 program "relies on responsible property owners to help us provide quality homes to low-income families," the agency said in a statement. "Our role is to ensure that these landlords are in compliance with health and safety standards."

Agency officials said inspectors have found a "noticeable increase" of mold over the last year, generally, because of the increase in rain.

Given that health consequences can be severe, Norton said, her group wants state and local lawmakers to treat mold more like toxic lead paint. She said the fungus, along with moisture intrusion and carbon monoxide, should be added to health and safety

threats under state law that require landlords to act, just as they're compelled to act to protect renters from lead paint.

The state requires that tenants in properties that could contain lead paint be given a bill of rights that includes a "notice of defect" form. The tenants can use the form to report if there is chipping, flaking or peeling paint — or if there are problems in the house that would cause the paint to do that. Norton said she wants mold to be added to the list of defects a landlord is required to remediate.

"With the change in climate and so much rain and so many older houses, the risk becomes higher," Norton said.

Adam Skolnik, who runs the Maryland Multi-Housing Association, which represents landlords, pushed back on the discussion about new regulations. He said renters already have an assortment of remedies from inspections to escrow court. Skolnik said passing new rules for landlords in response to an unusually wet year is unnecessary and could be costly to renters. They could face increased expenses or fees that would be passed on to them from the property owners, he said.

"What isn't working from a legal remedy perspective?" Skolnik said. "Judges hear mold and they get very nervous for the people living there and they send inspectors out."

Though the City Council passed new rules this year to require more safety inspections for renters, the council did not address mold problems directly.

The sweeping overhaul of the 50-year-old licensing rules for rental properties in Baltimore did not update the housing code to allow direct citation for mold, and the fungus

is not on the checklist for inspections under the new rental license program. Under those regulations, all rental buildings must pass a safety inspection to be granted a two-year license. Eventually, city officials will split landlords into two categories: ones that can receive three-year licenses and others deemed negligent who will face more frequent inspections.

The legislation followed a yearlong investigation by The Baltimore Sun that documented lax enforcement of rental housing codes. A review of the city's rent escrow court found that judges ruled in favor of landlords far more often than tenants, even with testimony from inspectors.

Tammy Hawley, spokeswoman for the city's Department of Housing and Community Development, said inspectors have other tools for citing problems that can lead to mold, including interior leaks and sanitary conditions. She did not take a position on whether the city code should be changed to directly address mold. Henry, the councilman, said he will call for an informational hearing into whether tenants need more protections against mold. But he said figuring how the city would regulate mold — or if it should — is complex. He expects to introduce a resolution at Monday's council meeting.

"Sometimes there is visible mold, but some visible mold isn't dangerous — some is," Henry, of North Baltimore, said. "This is an issue the council should be better educated on."

Baltimore Sun audience editor Steve Earley contributed to this article. ywenger@baltsun.com twitter.com/yvonnewenger

Neuropathic pain addressed

PAIN, From page 1

by damage to nerves, the spinal cord or neurons in the thalamus, the part of the brain that relays information from the body's sensory receptors.

Neuropathic pain encompasses a range of diagnoses, and symptoms affect an estimated 7-10 percent of the population. It can manifest in different ways, with both continuous and intermittent pain. The condition does not usually respond to pain medications, and surgical remedies only work for some patients.

"Even if it responds early on, the treatments eventually fail. And the side effects of treatments are many and very, very serious. Many medications lose their effectiveness," said Dr. Dheeraj Gandhi, the University of Maryland's director of interventional neuro-radiology and the study's principal investigator. "Most patients don't have very many options and they have to live through this constant pain and the effect it has on the rest of their brain, including cognition, the effect on mood and unemployment. The majority of patients are not able to live their lives to their fullest."

Durfee spent her days avoiding movement after her pain began in 2010. She stayed in bed as long as possible in the morning before leaving for her job as a pharmacy technician at Walmart. In the evenings, she tried to find a comfortable seat on the couch until she went to sleep.

"It made my days very, very long," Durfee said. "I never knew when the deep, searing poker pain was gonna hit."

Steroid injections, spinal fusions, pills and nerve stimulators helped, but the effectiveness of each treatment faded eventually.

Tim Clanton, 54, had seven knee surgeries, an ankle surgery, three spinal sympathectomies — in which a nerve is cut or clamped — and three nerve blocks after a belt-loader crushed his knee as he was hauling luggage onto a commercial jet more than 30 years ago.

"Over the years I've had probably every anti-inflammatory that is known to man, along with lots of other medication," the Dallas resident said. "Being on medication is not good. I prefer not to be, but I also have to work and provide a living for my family."

Gandhi said focused ultrasound could provide more lasting relief for neuropathic pain patients and help reduce their reliance

on pain medications — including opioids, which are often used to manage neuropathic pain.

"If you look at overall health costs for pain-related treatments, the U.S. probably spends more than \$500 billion annually on treatments related to pain," Gandhi said. "So if this procedure works well in these types of patients, it could be a very significant alternative to what we have today."

Dr. Neal Kassell, founder and chairman of the Focused Ultrasound Foundation, said the University of Maryland trial could prove that such treatment fills the "holy grail" of improving health outcomes while decreasing costs. The risk of infection is low because there are no surgical cuts. And, because it's a one-time treatment, focused ultrasound could reduce costs for pain patients, too.

For now, Gandhi said, the procedure's cost is comparable to open-brain surgery because so many researchers are involved.

The study is one step in an arduous process toward regulatory approval. The current trial allows researchers to treat five patients with one of three types of neuropathic pain: shooting pain that does not respond to neurosurgery, pain from spinal cord injuries or phantom limb pain after an amputation.

If the treatment's safety is proven, the research team will review results with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and request permission to treat more neuropathic pain patients.

neuropathic pain is among more than 100 conditions being studied for treatment with focused ultrasound.

"Fields like this grow exponentially and I believe we're right now at the inflection point of that curve," said Kassell, whose organization is funding the University of Maryland trial. "Focused ultrasound will be as revolutionary to therapy as [magnetic resonance] scanning was to diagnosis."

Some doctors caution that more research is needed before focused ultrasound can be lauded as a cure-all.

Dr. Art Sedrakyan, a professor of health-care policy and research for Weill Cornell Medical College, said such therapies as focused ultrasound, cryotherapy and microwave ablation may show promise, but their long-term effects are unknown.

"We need to ensure that we don't get too excited about them in terms of their



KIM HAIRSTON/BALTIMORE SUN

Nancy Nahory, a University of Maryland Medical Center radiographer, talks with Tim Clanton before he is treated for pain he's suffered for more than 30 years with focused ultrasound as part of a clinical trial by researchers at the medical school.

effectiveness," Sedrakyan said.

He's developing a database of patients treated with such emerging technologies, so they can be tracked for years.

"We need to clearly encourage innovation," Sedrakyan said. "But what's critical is to ensure evaluation."

Though treating neuropathic pain with focused ultrasound is experimental in the United States, it's gained more traction in Europe, where Dr. Daniel Jeanmonod pioneered the technique in Switzerland. His team referred Durfee to the Maryland trial after she came across his work.

For the procedure, a patient's shaved head is affixed to a steel frame to immobilize it as they lay in an MRI machine.

The top of the head is submerged in a water bath and coupled to a focused ultrasound transducer — a helmet-like contraption with more than 1,000 elements that direct sound waves to burn a 5-6 millimeter section of the brain. Doctors constantly monitor the patient, who is awake during the procedure.

"We're actually, if you will, cooking a small group of nerve cells," said Dr. Howard M. Eisenberg, chair of Maryland's neurosurgery department, who is conducting the trial.

It was uncomfortable at times, Clanton said — like a headache. But it was a small price to pay for relief from 33 years of pain that left him limping, stopped him from playing with his three children and stole his quality of life.

"As a kid, you hear people that are older and you think, how can someone live with pain? I found out at [age] 20," Clanton said. "It's been tough. And if more patients can do this, it could be life changing."

Clanton's pain has not disappeared since his treatment in December, but he said it's dulled. He's limping less and doesn't shy away from stairs. Best of all, he said, he's lowered his medication doses — something he wants for other patients in his position.

"When pain is bad you kind of sit there and you're hurting and it's an all-day thing and all night. You never get out of it," Clanton said. "So if at minimum they do the procedure and the medication that they're on works more efficiently, that's worth it. And I can tell you that that's happening with me."

Durfee had the procedure Sept. 13, and her results were immediate. After the procedure ended, she sat up on the table without assistance and did something she hadn't done in years — she danced out of the hospital room.

"I've been pain-free ever since," she said. Gandhi, Eisenberg and their team are monitoring the patients for a year with the aim of seeing at least a 40 percent reduction in their pain intensity and a 30 percent reduction in disabilities related to their pain. So far their patients have seen positive results, though it's too soon to tell how effective the treatment will be in the long term.

Clanton said his friends and family have commented that he's moving more easily. And Durfee can now wrestle with her dogs, play with her grandchildren and sit through a movie without wiggling to find a comfortable position.

"I like being pain-free," she said. "It's fabulous." smeehan@baltsun.com twitter.com/sarahvmeehan