

# THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

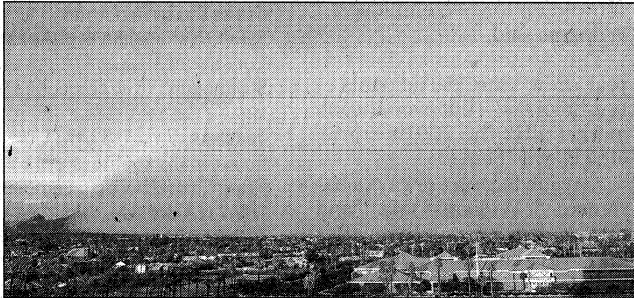
Founded in 1890 ■ A Gannett newspaper ■ Incorporating The Phoenix Gazette

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1889-1975 ■ Publisher, 1946-1975

JOHN ZIDICH  
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## THE ISSUE: VALLEY FEVER



MICHAEL CHOW/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

A fungus that lives in our arid soil causes valley fever when it's inhaled. Two-thirds of U.S. cases occur in our state, affecting an estimated 100,000 Arizonans each year. Let's stop the toll.

May 24, 2010

# DOSES OF FUNDING NEEDED IN FIGHT VS. VALLEY FEVER

The best medicine for valley fever right now is money. And the federal government is delivering a \$3 million dose. The money, a grant from the National Institutes of Health, will pay for manufacturing and testing a potential cure.

Valley Fever Solutions, a Tucson-based company, is working on a promising drug, nikkomycin Z, that has languished for lack of interest from pharmaceutical companies.

The disease is a double curse in Arizona: It can be debilitating and even deadly, both to humans and pets, but it gets little attention because it's confined to the desert Southwest.

A fungus that lives in our arid soil causes the infection when it's inhaled. Two-thirds of U.S. cases occur in Arizona: Maricopa, Pinal and Pima counties have been dubbed the "Valley Fever Corridor."

Of the estimated 100,000 Arizonans who become infected each year, about a third come down with respiratory symptoms that resemble types of pneumonia. So better diagnostics are crucial, too.

As patients are screened for the drug trials, it will also be an opportunity to test a new diagnostic process that uses fungal proteins, says John Galgiani, chief medical officer of Valley Fever Solutions. He is also director of the non-profit Valley Fever Center for Excellence, based at the University of Arizona College of Medicine.

The NIH funding is enough to cover drug trials in Tucson.

It would be even better to extend the study to the Phoenix ar-

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ea, which has a larger pool of potential participants.

That would require another \$2 million to \$3 million. Here's a worthy project for non-profits and philanthropists, who can donate to the Valley Fever Center for Excellence.

And, on the corporate side, here's an opportunity for investors to explore.

Arizonans have been picking up the pace in fighting our own plague. Grass-roots groups are raising money. There's a growing awareness campaign. Donors are stepping forward.

We all have good reason to pitch in.

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The Diamondbacks' Conor Jackson, a baseball player in peak condition, lost a year of play to valley fever.

It's time to stop the toll.