



COCCI CONNECTION

Published by Arizona Victims of Valley Fever, Inc.
a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization

website: <http://www.arizonavictimsofvalleyfever.org>

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Inside this Issue:

- Non-Profit Status
- Board of Directors
- AVVF Officers
- Messages
- Treasurers Report
- Donations
- Profile
- Confirmed VF Cases
- Walk for the Cure
- Coming Attractions
- Thank You
- Our Logo & Ribbons
- Fundraisers
- Ribbon Support
- Future Support Groups
- Volunteers Needed
- Cocci Spores/Sporettes
- Editorials
- More Editorials

NON-PROFIT STATUS

We first became a legal non-profit organization in 2008 then in February of 2011, the Arizona Victims of Valley Fever, Inc. filed for our 501 (c) 3 and received notification from the Treasury Department/IRS that we were now a tax deductible non-profit organization. Our tax number is: 27-0444983

This was a time and painstaking ordeal and we are glad to have it behind us.

MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tim Kuberski, MD, semi-retired Valley Fever infectious disease doctor treating VF for 30-40 years.

Craig Rundbaken, DO, Valley Fever Clinic and A.I.R. Med
Stephanie Ostrowski, DVM, Recently retired from the CDC&P.

Ray Arenofsky, JD, accident attorney and our attorney, if needed

James Knollmiller, JD, a tax attorney and handles all of our IRS filings (Thank God)
Janet Phelan, MS, entrepreneur of the year for the state of Nebraska & founder of a 501 (c) 3 business

Shirley McDonald, Engr./JETF,

Janice Arenofsky, professional writer, who lost a dog to Valley Fever.

Marvin Freeman, retired media — public relations career and a cocci meningitis survivor

Pat White, retired from the City of Surprise, as executive assistant, in the City Manager's office, due to Valley Fever. Lost Mother to Valley Fever.

Mary Parker, retired from Sears, raised five children and a victim of Valley Fever.



AVVF OFFICERS

Janice Arenofsky, Executive Director & Writer
Pat White, Founder & Director
Marv Freeman, Public Relations & Marketing Director
Mary Parker, Secretary
Teresa RaShay Field, Creative Director

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: JANICE ARENOFSKY



EMAIL: jarenofsky@cox.net or CALL: 480-831-9079

We are another month closer to our November Walk for the Cure, and any support from businesses, especially those in the Sun City West area, would be welcome.

Here's something each and every one of you can do next month. If you regularly use one or two businesses (restaurants, grocery stores, cleaners, dentists) in the West Valley, ask the office manager or decision maker of the business, if he or she would consider supporting our Walk. For as little as a \$50 contribution, the name of that business will be displayed at the Walk, and businesses will be allowed to hand out promotional materials. It's great advertising for small businesses. Who does not need all the name recognition they can get in these hard economic times.

Please contact me if any business agrees to sponsor our Walk, and I will supply you with educational materials on Valley Fever as well as a support form. Anyone who gets a sponsor will receive a free pass to the Walk. So become a super salesperson and save \$10. If the business would rather provide an in-kind donation (such as a gift basket or free pair of eyeglasses), that will also be great! We need these kind of items for our prize drawings.

I'm looking forward to attending a panel on valley fever on Wednesday, July 27th. The panel is for health professionals (and health nonprofits like us) and will be held at ASU's Memorial Union. Benjamin Park, MD, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will speak as will John Galgiani, MD, director of the VFCE, and Janice Blair, MD, infectious disease specialist at the Mayo Clinic, Scottsdale. Our next newsletter will include any new information gathered from the panel discussions.

Speak to you again soon!

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR — FOUNDER: PAT CURLEY WHITE



EMAIL: pat-valleyfecer@live.com or Call: 623-584-8331

Dear VF Victims, Friends, Supporters and Sponsors of AVVF,



As you read in the May/June Cocci Connection newsletter, the AVVF beginning July 1, 2011, will be charging an annual fee of \$10 per person for membership. Please make out your check to AVVF and mail to Pat White, 13106 W. Lyric Drive, Sun City West, AZ 85375, when you can.

This decision was not made lightly, but for the betterment of the organization and other reasons listed below.

- **First**, this should allow us **not** to have fundraisers for us to function financially and continue to do our mission work. This \$10 fee is tax deductible.
- **Second**, as you may or may not know, the Valley Fever Alliance (VFA) of Phoenix has joined forces with the Arizona Victims of Valley Fever, Inc. (AVVF). This took place in the beginning of January of 2011. I was thrilled to have this happen for several reasons. The VFA was a grass-roots group, who began the “Valley Fever Walks for the Cure.” By these two groups becoming one makes us stronger, brings awareness and support throughout the entire Valley, more help, and continued longevity of our non-profit, 501 (c) 3 organization and better financial help and support.
- **Third**, AVVF wants to continue to bring awareness, help in understanding this disease to the public, how it affects humans and animals, help the public find doctors qualified in diagnosing and in treating this disease; and to raise funds for the cure and vaccination of Valley Fever.
- **Fourth**, for the past six years, AVVF has been a self-supported non-profit organization. I was “self” and my husband, John, was “supported.” I was fortunate enough to have SSD and disability insurance from work; however, effective October 2011, my SSD and disability pay will cease. I will only be getting a meager Social Security check and pension (as most seniors, it seems strange calling myself a senior), will be much less than what I was collecting. “Supporter” informed me that I have to watch my valley fever spending. Ouch!
- **Fifth**, AVVF wants to continue helping victims in need and this \$10 membership fee will help us with costs for website, office supplies, needs and tools to continue our educating the public about valley fever. I believe you have all been thankful that AVVF was here for you. We want to continue to be there for those victims, their families, friends and visitors to come.
- **Sixth**, I believe that by each member helping to support AVVF by your membership, each member takes an ownership in AVVF and its future. This allows the future victims to have a place to go for help and assistance. There will be no exclusions, if someone is unable to afford the \$10 membership fee; we understand the difficult times we are all in and the wicked “Donut Hole” for some, so — **NO ONE WILL BE LEFT OUT**, if one cannot afford the membership fee, just let us know. Our main goal is to continue to help and to educate the public. That comes first for AVVF.

As I said several years ago, so many of you have said “Thank You” to me, but all of you have helped me too by giving me a **purpose** that I sorely needed. I thank you for coming to the support group meetings, our walk and supporting AVVF etc. For those of you who are doing well and ‘living your life,” as it should be, don’t forget us. Stop by and let us know how you are doing, better yet, join us for our Walk on November 6th and see old and meet new friends.





EMAIL: mmfcreate@aol.com or CALL: 602-242-9527

Valley Fever is Arizona's Disease. The Arizona Victims of Valley Fever invites all radio & TV stations, newspapers, magazines, companies and community leaders in our area to join forces to defeat this terrible disease.

Please help us raise funds to find a cure and educate doctors and the general public about the deadly air we breathe. The recent dust storms have made things worse. It is imperative that we encourage those who experience prolonged flu-like symptoms to have their doctors test them for the disease (blood tests, X-rays).

To arrange for on-air, newspaper and magazine interviews and seminars about "The Myths & Realities of Valley Fever," please contact me at (602) 242-9527 mmfcreate@aol.com

TREASURERS REPORT by John White Month Ending: May 2011

<u>April 2011</u>	<u>May 2011</u>	<u>June 2011</u>	<u>July 2011</u>
Checking \$324.00	Checking: \$52.06	Checking \$52.06	Checking \$
Savings \$632.09	Savings \$732.17	Savings \$732.25	Savings \$
<u>TOTAL \$956.09</u>	<u>TOTAL \$784.23</u>	<u>TOTAL \$784.31</u>	<u>TOTAL \$</u>

<u>Donations Total</u>	\$940
In Memory of (July)	\$185
Friends of AVVF (mix)	\$755
<u>Book Sales Total</u> (\$16/ea.)	\$
<u>Miscellaneous Sales Total</u>	\$
➤ Hats @ \$10.00/ea.	\$
➤ Bumper Stickers	\$
➤ VF Awareness Ribbon	\$
➤ Miscellaneous	\$
➤ Jugs	\$
➤ Pop Tops	\$
<u>Membership Fees</u> (\$10/ea.)	\$
<u>2011 Walk Total</u>	\$
➤ Sponsors	\$
➤ Donations	\$
➤ Registration Fee (\$10/ea)	\$



DONATIONS MADE: "IN MEMORY OF:"

DONOR	IN MEMORY OF	AMOUNT
Sarah Lopez, PhD	Family of: Frank Ostrowski, PhD	\$100
Pat White	Parents: Tom & Mary Curley	\$50
Pat White	Cousin: Jim Keenan	\$10
Pat White	Girlfriend/Relative: Marlene Ferguson	\$25
TOTAL		\$185.00

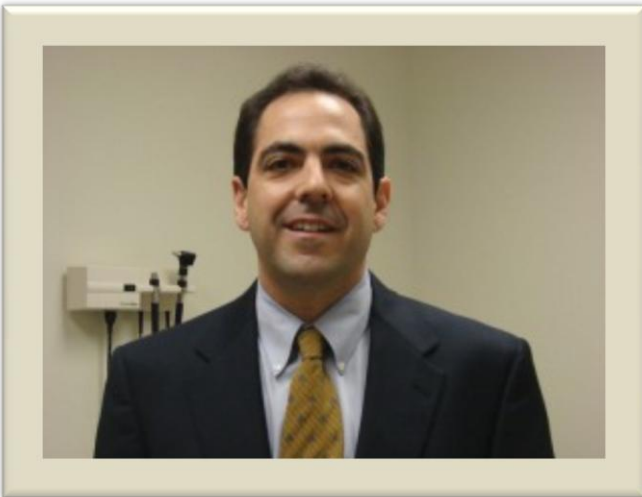
DONATIONS MADE: "BY FRIENDS OF AVVF:"

DONOR'S	AMOUNT
Heinz Grunwald	\$100
Ray Arenofsky's group	\$405
Irene Polczer	\$250
TOTAL	\$755

VALLEY FEVER PROFILE

DUST STORM MAY TRIGGER VALLEY FEVER

Rundbaken, (On our Board of Directors)



What is the treatment for valley fever?

Before the availability of antifungal medications, the natural history of initial pulmonary infections was determined to resolve in at least 95 percent of patients. Studies have not been completed yet to determine if drug therapy hastens the resolution of immediate symptoms or prevents subsequent complications. The physician usually monitors the progress of the patient by chest X-rays, following the cocci serology (blood test) titer and the severity and duration of symptoms. This may require frequent visits to the doctor. If weight loss and night sweats continue, infiltrates in the lungs enlarge, and the inability to work persists, antifungal

medication usually is considered.

— Courtesy Arizona Department of Health Services



A Sun City West physician said he believes the Phoenix area could see a sizable outbreak in valley fever cases stemming from Tuesday night's haboob that sent dust spores airborne for hundreds of miles across Arizona — and possibly beyond.

Individuals who have symptoms that include a fever, chills, sweating and joint pain within the next few days and weeks may be experiencing the onset of valley fever, said Dr. Craig Rundbaken, who practices pulmonology and internal medicine at Banner Del E. Webb Medical Center in Sun City West.

"We have to be watching now," he said of the after-effects of Tuesday night's dust storm, noting 40 percent of all individuals who inhaled dust spores could become ill. "There's definitely risk for an outbreak after a storm like that."

Rundbaken said those who have never experienced any symptoms of valley fever are most susceptible to contracting the disease, noting those who were previously infected and cleared typically don't see symptoms return. But he said the hardest hit areas are typically the Sun Cities as many residents are older and have underlying medical problems.

Experts say individuals age 60 and older, as well as those of Native American, African or Filipino descent are more likely to develop a serious infection, as are those who have a weakened immune system and who take medications that suppress the immune system.

While valley fever symptoms can last quite some time, most cases are relatively mild and eventually go away on their own.

Rundbaken said the typical incubation period for valley fever is between seven and 31 days.

Those who are experiencing the symptoms should immediately visit a physician to determine whether it may be valley fever. While blood tests are given, Rundbaken said patients who have results that come back negative could still have valley fever as it's not always traceable.

Two-thirds of all valley fever infections in the United States are contracted in Arizona — and Maricopa County is often considered ground zero, according to the Valley Fever Center for Excellence. The Tucson-based center at the University of Arizona is home to a number of physicians and researchers offering assistance to infected patients. Researchers are also studying ways to eventually cure the disease.

Valley fever, or coccidioidomycosis, is a fungal infection that starts in the lungs and is obtained by breathing in fungal spores found in dust. While dust particles can contain anywhere from 3 to 5 microns of fungal spores, Rundbaken said it takes only one to cause respiratory infection.



The Valley's hot, arid climate that includes warm winters and little precipitation is perfect for spreading and breeding valley fever, according to Rundbaken. The low altitude in the central desert areas of Arizona also contribute to the disease's spread.

"Anything that will exacerbate dust will exacerbate the number of potential valley fever cases we see," Rundbaken said.

Rundbaken said there's no cure for valley fever; at this point, physicians are taking all preventative measures in their attempts to neutralize the disease. Many patients require medication throughout their lifetime.

Zach Colick can be reached at 623-876-2522 or zcolick@yourwestvalley.com.

CONFIRMED VALLEY FEVER CASES CHARTED — 1993 to Present

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTALS
2007	347	416	378	385	344	333	4393	396	284	371	508	542	4,832
	17,350	20,800	18,900	19,250	17,200	16,650	21,150	19,800	14,200	18,550	25,400	27,100	241,600
2008	475	409	309	333	390	317	354	313	375	335	460	747	4,773
	23,750	20,450	15,450	16,650	19,500	15,850	17,700	15,650	18,750	16,750	23,000	37,350	238,650
2009	491	350	384	388	481	1,263	1,153	1,018	1,161	1,067	1,393	1,167	10,279
	24,550	17,500	19,200	19,400	24,050	63,150	28,725	50,850	58,050	53,350	69,650	58,350	513,950
2010	929	825	918	715	840	915	883	992	923	1,172	1,351	1,554	11,895
	46,450	41,250	45,900	35,750	41,950	38,450	44,000	49,950	46,250	58,200	64,300	77,700	594,750
2011	1,450	370	388	418	2,336	1,862							
	42,050	18,500	19,400	20,900	109,138	69,341							
2012													

1993	580	29,000	2001	2,301	115,050	2009	10,279	513,950
1994	578	28,900	2002	3,118	155,900	2010	11,895	606,645
1995	623	31,150	2003	2,695	134,750	2011		
1996	655	32,750	2004	3,665	183,250	2012		
1997	958	47,900	2005	3,778	188,900	2013		
1998	1,474	73,700	2006	5,535	276,750	2014		
1999	1,812	90,600	2007	5,042	252,100	2015		
2000	1,917	95,850	2008	4,773	238,650	2016		

The **bold, black numbers** are confirmed cases by the ADHS and the CDC; which are only two (2) percent of the reported infections. The **bold, turquoise numbers** represent the missing 98% of the cases not reported in Arizona. If you add the black and turquoise together, you get the total infections for that year in Arizona.

AVVF'S WALK FOR THE CURE



UPDATES

Vendors who have signed up to have a table or two at the walk:

- + AVVF Education Tables
 - Handouts
 - Petition signatures
- + AVVF Registration Tables
- + AVVF Sales and Order Tables
- + Dr. Craig Rundbaken, DO tables
- + Dr. Joshua Winston, DMV table
- + SCW Companion Animals Club (our co-sponsor) table
- + Grand Grooming and Pet Hotel table
- + Mustard Seed, table
- + Lorraine Winandy, free seated chair massages
- + Water station for humans and dogs
- + JETF
- + Companion Animal Club
- + Vets Association
- + Dr. Sly
- + Kohls table
 - Surprise on Bell Road & Litchfield Road
 - Surprise on Cactus & Reems Road
- + Banner Hospital — Del Webb table
- + Music
- + Entertainment
 - El Mirage Mariachi Trio
 - Page Trio (looks good)
 - Elroy
 - Dr. Caplan's Band
 - Charles David's Uke Band
- + Magician
- + Balloon Lady
- + Painted Faces
- + Food Booth
- + American Lung Association {Janice}
- + Agility Dog Course
- + Pet Store
- + Fire Station & CPR "Annie" {speak to Holly S}
- + Photographer (for pictures of your pets, family and self). I might be able to get someone from the Photograph Club to take pictures. We can also set up a small vignette, what do you think?

We need help for the following on the day of the Walk, Sunday, Nov. 6th (7 a.m. to Noonish):

- Setup



- Tear Down
- Cleaning Up the Park Area
- Registration: Sign up/Collection of monies
- Sales: Book, Hats, Ribbons, etc.
- Handing out bottled water

COMING ATTRACTIONS

July 21, 2011	Support group meeting at PORA in Sun City West from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
July 27, 2011	ASU, Lecture on Valley Fever
August 18, 2011	Support group meeting at PORA in Sun City West from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
September 15, 2011	Support group meeting at PORA in Sun City West from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
October 20, 2011	Support group meeting at PORA in Sun City West from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
NOVEMBER 6, 2011	WALK FOR THE CURE at Beardsley Park in Sun City West, AZ
	REGISTER, GO TO: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NYNCXL5. FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS THERE. OR REGISTER AT THE SITE ON NOVEMBER 6.
November 17, 2011	Support group meeting at PORA in Sun City West from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
December 15, 2011	Support group meeting at PORA in Sun City West from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
January 15, 2012	Come Run with the "Valley Fever Spores!" @ the PF Chang's AZ Rock-n-Roll Marathon. The "Spores" are sponsored by Dr. Craig Rundbaken. To register contact vfspores@yahoo.com. The course is known to be flat and fast. The race starts at Wesley Bolin Park Memorial Plaza in Downtown Phoenix, with both races merging for a finish in downtown Tempe. Additional details and a map of the course can be found at http://arizona.competitor.com.
February , 2012	Support Group meeting at PORA in Sun City West from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
March 24, 2012	U of AZ, VFCE, hosting the annual Valley Fever 56 th Annual Conference in Tucson, AZ

THANK YOU

I wish to thank P.O.R.A. for allowing AVVF the use of their classroom, screen, projector and microphone. They have been a blessing to AVVF, and I will forever be grateful for their kindness, support, generosity and assistance. Kudos to P.O.R.A!

OUR COLORS and RIBBON LOGO



What is the meaning of our colors? The black and turquoise we felt were fitting colors for Valley Fever. The black with turquoise (lettering) is significant of those who lost a loved one or an animal to Valley Fever. The turquoise with black (lettering) is significant of someone with or a surviving victim of Valley Fever. Any



form of turquoise (clothing, hats, jewelry, accessories etc.) also means that you support the cure for “Arizona’s Disease” declared so by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) in 2008. We welcome all victims, friends of AVVF, people, animals, doctors, etc. to use these colors when it comes to Valley Fever awareness.

The reason for turquoise became very clear as it is, **first**, the gemstone for the state of Arizona; **second**, it involves mining; which can produce Valley Fever in those doing the mining or working with the gemstone; and **third**; turquoise is the symbol of strength and wellness and **fourth**, everyone can wear and looks good in the color turquoise.

OTHER FUNDRAISERS (NOW & FUTURE)



We have been collecting pop-top tabs off cans of pop and food for about the last year. This is such a simple way to raise money and it does not cost you a cent and takes one second to pop off the tab. Between Sun City, Sun City West, Surprise, Peoria, Glendale and Youngtown and those city businesses, we should be able to raise substantial amounts of money for the Cure of Valley Fever annually. Please begin saving your pop-top tabs at home, work, and ask family and friends to do so too. Thanks.

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT BY RIBBON(S) AWARENESS



Lost a loved one or pet to Valley Fever



Someone in your home has been infected with VF

Fly a ribbon for each family member or pet infected with Valley Fever.

FUTURE FUNDRAISERS



Please contact us, if you would be interested in chairing or co-chairing one of these future fundraisers:

- ✚ Cookbook (one book for both humans and dogs — special section)
- ✚ Bracelets
- ✚ Hats \$10.00 each



• **Lost a loved one or pet to VF**



Have, had or support VF

If you know that you will want a hat, let me know. I want to have enough on hand for everyone on Walk Day, but we are watching how many we buy. Cost is \$10 each.

- ✚ Magnet VF Ribbon Awareness
- ✚ Pens
- ✚ Mugs
- ✚ Key Chains
- ✚ Calendars
- ✚ Shredding Documents Fundraiser
- ✚ Golf Tournament Fundraiser
- ✚ Entertainment Extravaganza Fundraiser
- ✚ Luncheon and Style Show Fundraiser

MORE SUPPORT GROUPS?

We are looking into having several more support groups in Arizona to help those who have been infected with valley fever. Currently, we are looking at having one in Tucson, a group in the Scottsdale area and then one in the Southeast and Southwest Valley. We will be discussing with Children's Hospital about a support group for kids and teens. Is anyone interested in being a support group leader? An RN or someone from the medical field will be able to get up to speed easier but open to anyone who cares and wants to make a difference. I am willing to tutor anyone who is interested.

VOLUNTEERS ALWAYS NEEDED



Can you help us? Will you help us? What are your talents and skills? What would you like to do and what can you do, especially if battling Valley Fever? Making phone calls to those who don't have email regarding meetings, walks, website etc. would be helpful.

COCCI SPORES AND SPORETTES

Can you sing? Can you carry a tune? If you can, AVVF wants to start a singing group called the Cocci Spores and Sporettes. We will take "oldie but goodie" songs and tweak them to have a valley fever theme. It should be lots of fun and we can make our point by crooning it to the public.

Please let us know, if you want to be a Cocci Spore and Sporette!

Musicians are welcome to join and play for our singing Spores/Sporettes (i.e. piano, guitar, banjo, drums, violin, trumpet, sax, flutes etc). Don't be shy. I know there is talent out there.

Contact: Mary Parker at 623-933-2414 or Pat White at 623-584-8331. We are waiting for our phones to ring us.

EDITORIAL

July 10, 2011

RE: **VALLEY FEVER AND THE HABOOB aka DUST STORM (politically correct!)**

By **Pat White**

The massive haboobs brought more than dust and wind into the Valley. It brought the *Coccidioides posadasii* fungal spore not the immitis with it. You could see the dust particles, but you will never see the fungal spores as 15 trillion spores will fit into a cubic inch. You will not see your enemy coming at you.

I am worried beyond the haboob. The spores will linger for days to weeks in the air. Everyone will be cleaning up from the dust storm by sweeping and hosing down his or her cars, houses, porches, driveways, sidewalks etc. What you may not realize is that there are still spores coating everything and still just as dangerous to humans and animals.

Please wear a mask when necessary. The mask that can give you 100 percent protection no one is going to wear — but the best mask one can use is a N95 made by 3M. You can find it in any hardware store. There are two forms of the mask (vent at



\$6.99) and (no vent at \$2.99). Do not pinch pennies; get the one with the vent. It expels your breathe, without it, the mask will become unbearably hot.

Buy the: N95 by 3M. Cost \$6.99

If you have been infected by the first dust storm and are going to show signs and symptoms not before July 12th and usually not after August 2. Sixty percent of the public will become infected and never will show signs or symptoms. Once you are infected, you are infected for life. There is no cure. You also may never be a blood or organ donor. This is frightening as no one is testing the blood or organs for transplant patients.

If you test positive, you are positive for valley fever, but if you test negative, you still may be positive. One-third of the public will be infected and their blood serum will never test positive for valley fever, so stay on top of it and do not assume your doctor is familiar with valley fever.

SIGNS to watch for: Extreme fatigue, fever — low/high grade, flu-like symptoms, shortness of breath/wheezing, coughing (mild to heavy), chest pain/pressure, night sweats/chills, headaches, nausea, loss of appetite, rapid loss of weight, rash, burning sensation on feet/joints, muscle aches, muscle stiffness, joint pain, joint swelling etc.

OTHER CONCERNS: If you are African-American, Hispanic, American Indian, Filipino, Asian, have diabetes, cancer, organ transplant patient, thyroid disease, any autoimmune disease and pregnant; you are at high risk. Take precautions, please.

Valley Fever is not bacterial or viral pneumonia, but it a fungal pneumonia that is treated with *Azole* drugs. These drugs are not a cure, but only stops the growth of the "fungal parasite" that is now within your lung(s) and you are the host.

There is no such thing as immunity for anyone. If you breathe, it is just a matter of time before you will be infected.

For those who want to learn more about valley fever, Arizona Victims of Valley Fever does free lectures to bring awareness and has a support group that meets every third Thursday of the month, from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at P.O.R.A., 13815 Camino del Sol, Sun City West, AZ 85375 or call Pat at 623-584-8331 for more information.

"It takes a village to raise a kid," attributed to an old African proverb, but "It is going to take everyone, every Arizona business in the state of Arizona, the state of Arizona and the federal government to eliminate this disease," says White. Currently, this is not happening financially nor allowing the public to be aware of Cocci. The state of Arizona declared Valley Fever as "Arizona's Disease" in 2008, but they do not fund their disease. The federal government stopped funding valley fever back in 1982, to fund HIV/aids. It has never been funded since. It is not a matter of "if" we can afford to stop this



disease; it is we "must" stop this disease. In the last five years (2005-2010), at least one-third of Arizona has been infected. This is frightening to me. This does not include our visitors, visiting business men/women, and those just traveling through Arizona. If you get ill, your life as you know it, may change forever for months to years.

Pat Curley White, Founder of Arizona Victims of Valley Fever, Inc. and is battling valley fever now for six years.

MORE EDITORIALS



Posted: Tuesday, July 12, 2011 12:24 pm | Updated: 3:59 pm, Tue Jul 12, 2011.

VALLEY FEVER

Richard Thayer, of Apache Junction, shown Tuesday, July 12, 2011, suffers from valley fever after getting very sick in September 2010.

Thayer treats his condition with the generic drug *Fluconazole*.

July marks the beginning of the high-risk season for valley fever, a prevalent fungal infection in Arizona that can be hard to diagnose and treat, and last week's dust storm may have exposed many residents to its spores.

The tiny particles can stay airborne for extended periods of time, even after the storm is over, said Pat White, a local valley fever expert and founder of Arizona Victims of Valley Fever.

"If you live here for long enough, you will probably be exposed to it," White said.

About 60 percent of the people exposed to the fungus either have few or no symptoms, according to the Arizona Department of Health Services. The majority of these people will not need to see a doctor. But for those who do, the disease can be life changing.



“It knocked me for a loop,” said Richard Thayer, 75, of Apache Junction.

Last September, Thayer started out with flu-like symptoms: a fever and extreme fatigue. His doctor treated him for pneumonia after a chest x-ray.

About a month after becoming sick, Thayer found answers after a couple rounds of antibiotics and a five-day hospital stay. He was sent to a pulmonologist and, following blood work and a CAT scan, was diagnosed with valley fever.

“I lost all kinds of energy,” Thayer said. “I lived in the recliner for a month.”

The once-active man could not even get up to eat, instead taking his meals in his chair.

“It was the complete lack of energy; I’d do one thing and then I’d be done for the day,” Thayer said.

Now, Thayer is feeling about 85 percent back to his old self. He is also off the anti-fungal medication after nine months.

Thayer’s case is both the exception and the rule. Although he is one of the few who experience prolonged symptoms, diagnosis and treatment for those, who do get it can be a long journey. The blood test does not always get a positive result even for those who have valley fever. In an effort to reduce the number of false-positive test results, the sensitivity for true positive test results are reduced, according to the website of the Valley Fever Center for Excellence at the University of Arizona.

White was diagnosed six years ago with valley fever and she never had a positive blood test. It took a lung biopsy to confirm she had the disease.

“It is common that people go to multiple doctors,” said Dr. Loreto Sulit, a pulmonologist at Banner Baywood Medical Center in Mesa.

Dust storm aftermath

In the search for a correct diagnosis, the UA center reports valley fever can be mistaken for cancer, tuberculosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic fatigue syndrome and others.

People who react to valley fever spores from the July 5 dust storm probably will start experiencing symptoms this week at the earliest, Sulit said.

Sulit is expecting to see an influx of patients with valley fever, but it probably will not happen for another three to four weeks.



A typical patient is treated for pneumonia with a couple rounds of antibiotics, Sulit said. Since those antibiotics treat bacterial pneumonia, it is not effective against a fungal lung infection.

There are a slew of valley fever symptoms, but the top five to look for are cough, fever, shortness of breath, rash and extreme fatigue, Sulit said.

Other symptoms include headache, joint ache, chest pain, night sweats, nausea, loss of appetite, and rapid weight loss.

Some people may not exhibit all the symptoms. Thayer lost 20 pounds during his episode of valley fever, but never had much of a cough or a rash.

Valley fever is caused by a fungus — *Coccidioides immitis* (commonly referred to as “cocci”) — that grows in the soil of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and southern portions of Utah and Nevada, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

When spores of cocci are lifted into the air, they can be easily inhaled. Most people who are exposed to spores will not show symptoms for seven to 28 days. The highest times for exposure in Arizona are July through August and October through November.

In 2010, there were 11,888 valley fever cases in Arizona, according to the Arizona Department of Health Services. Two-thirds of cases diagnosed in the United States are from Maricopa, Pima and Pinal counties, according to the Valley Fever Center for Excellence.

Many labels, little research

The center describes valley fever as an “orphan disease,” which means that although there are a large number of people in Arizona who contract it, there is not a large enough group in the country to make it worth the research and drug production costs for pharmaceutical companies.

Because pharmaceutical companies are not trying to find new ways to treat valley fever, most of the new research is being done in Tucson by the UA center. It is funded primarily by contributions from Arizonans, local businesses and cities in Maricopa, Pinal and Pima counties.

The best way to reduce chances of exposure is to stay inside when dust is blowing, according to Cara Christ, an Arizona Department of Health Services medical officer.

The department does not recommend that people wear masks, because the particles are so small that barriers do not protect very well, Christ said. As many as 15 trillion spores can fit in a square inch.



Instead, people who have been treated for pneumonia and are not getting better after a few weeks should ask their doctor for a valley fever blood test, Christ said.

“It’s a hidden disease,” Thayer said. “There is a lack of knowledge for a lot of people. People need to know about it.”

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Associated Press

PHOENIX DUST STORM

A dust storm known as a haboob rolls into downtown Phoenix July 5. Health officials are expecting an increase in valley fever cases in the next few months as a result of the storm.

Posted: Friday, July 15, 2011 8:15 pm

Dust storm stirs up more health concerns By Jeff Dempsey, Daily News-Sun | [0 comments](#)

Count Sun City West resident Pat White among those worried about the health effects of last week’s massive dust storm.

“(Tuesday) is the day,” she said in reference to July 12. “This is the first day since that haboob that people who were infected could start showing signs.”

The incubation period typically results in symptoms between seven and 31 days after the storm.

“Absolutely, people should be paying attention,” she said. “Between now and Aug. 2, pay attention for the signs.”

White, who was diagnosed with valley fever in January 2006, has spent most of her time since then raising awareness and fighting for a cure, including founding the Arizona Victims of Valley Fever group. She said dust storms should be avoided, especially those of last week’s caliber. “And if you’re going to do something like garden, wear a respirator mask,” she said. “And if you have to drive through a dust storm, be sure to circulate your air.”



Shirley McDonald, chair of the Joint Environmental Task Force, said the level of particulates in the air was astounding. “The readings from the Zuni Hills air monitor (in north Peoria) show a peak of 1,800 micrograms per cubic meter,” she said. “The average for the day was 140. I thought that was pretty impressive.”

John Galgiani, director of the Valley Fever Center for Excellence at the University of Arizona College of Medicine, said He expects to see a large increase in valley fever cases over the next two to three months, in line with what happened after a similar event in California in the late 1970s”.

“Years ago, a Santa Ana wind storm blew dust from the Central Valley as far north as the San Francisco Bay Area,” he said. “Kern County in California, like Maricopa County, is heavily endemic for the fungus that causes valley fever. As published in a medical journal, that storm resulted in 120 extra valley fever infections in Kern County, mostly in the subsequent two months.”

Galgiani said he expects to see many more cases after this haboob, an Arab word used to describe a thick dust storm or sandstorm that blows in deserts. “Because Maricopa County has 10 times the number of people and three times the proportion of the population susceptible to first valley fever infections, we should expect 3,600 additional valley fever infections in Maricopa County for a total of 5,000 infections in July and August,” he said. Galgiani echoed White’s advice, saying symptoms like chills, sweating fever or joint pain should be taken seriously. “People living in Phoenix and the surrounding areas should know about this risk and seek medical attention if they develop symptoms of pneumonia during that time,” he said.

For information, visit www.arizonavictimsofvalleyfever.org. *Jeff Dempsey may be reached at 623-876-2531 or ordempsey@yourwestvalley.com*

