

GOVERNMENT BY SECRET

In Viewpoints: Too much information being kept from citizens. Page H1

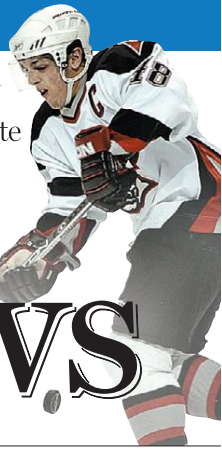


STRESS BUSTERS

In Weekend Life: Day spas provide oasis of relaxation Page F1

PLAYING TO WIN

In Sports: Last-minute goal lifts Sabres past Flyers. Page D1



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LISA LUNDY: "If I starve my kid ... where would I end up? In jail. How is it that the agencies and insurance company can get away with doing the same thing?"



Harry Scull Jr./Buffalo News

Lisa Lundy holds her daughter, Anne, 4, who must spend her life mainly inside their Cheektowaga home because of severe allergy problems, which continue to drain the family's resources.

Little girl, big dangers

A hyperallergic 4-year-old stays inside her house while her parents struggle to afford the uninsured treatments they believe keep their daughter alive

By BARBARA O'BRIEN
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Lisa Lundy is a mother on a mission.

Her 4-year-old daughter, Anne, can't eat most foods without suffering a severe allergic reaction.

The common cold looms as a life-threatening illness.

Her teeth are brown and decaying

and can't be repaired because of her allergies to chemicals.

Anne stays home most days, with her brothers, Luke, 9, and Noah, 6. They are home-schooled, in part to reduce the number of contaminants entering their Cheektowaga home.

Most weeks, Anne's only trip outside the home is to a doctor's sterile office.

Anne has extreme sensitivity to

chemicals, her doctor says. Other experts say the condition cannot be scientifically proven.

So Lundy is fighting the medical establishment to recognize the condition, and to pay for the treatments she is convinced are keeping her daughter alive.

"If I starve my kid so she's mal-

See **Allergies** on Page A2



Anne's world

Photo essay on page C10.

Milosevic dies in jail cell while on trial

Ex-Yugoslav leader denied war crimes

By ANTHONY DEUTSCH
AND DUSAN STOJANOVIC
ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Slobodan Milosevic was under pressure to wind up his defense in a few weeks, and he often stayed up late preparing questions for witnesses. Doctors repeatedly warned of the risk from his chronic high blood pressure compounded by the stress.

Saturday morning, a prison guard found the 64-year-old former Yugoslav leader lifeless in

bed. It was an abrupt end to his four-year U.N. war crimes trial on charges of orchestrating a decade of conflict that killed 250,000 people and tore the Yugoslav federation asunder.

Just last month, Milosevic complained in court of a "thundering noise" in his head. The next day he cut short an examination of a witness because of another headache.

The following day, Feb. 24, he protested the refusal of presiding Judge Patrick Robinson to let him go to Moscow for treatment, but Robinson cut him off.

"I'm not going to consider this," Robinson told him.

See **Milosevic** on Page A2

Sabres coach's daughter has mass on her brain

By BUCKY GLEASON
NEWS SPORTS REPORTER

PHILADELPHIA — The Buffalo Sabres could be without coach Lindy Ruff in the coming weeks while he and his wife tend to their 11-year-old daughter, Madeleine, who has an unidentified mass on her brain.

Ruff had been mysteriously absent in recent days while attending to "family matters." He skipped a news conference Thursday night following the Sabres' victory over Tampa Bay and did not show up for practice Friday,

which led to speculation as the Sabres prepared for the Philadelphia Flyers.

"There's no need to guess," Ruff said Saturday afternoon, before the Sabres took the ice against the Flyers. "It's something a lot of people have dealt with. Really, all we ask is that you say a prayer."

Ruff said the mass discovered on Madeleine's brain was about the size of a quarter. His family isn't likely to know exactly what it is until this week. He could miss

See **Ruff** on Page A2

Anne's family has paid \$60,000 for her since 2003

ALLERGIES • from A1

nourished, where would I end up? In jail," Lundy said. "How is it that the agencies and the insurance company can get away with doing the same thing to my kid and nothing's happening?"

Lundy and many others say the severe allergic reaction can be turned off by provoking an allergic response with an extract and administering a weaker dilution. But countless physicians say it's not a scientifically proven therapy.

It costs more than \$2,000 each month for the tests, allergy extracts and other treatment by an environmental physician, she said. Their insurance won't pay for it. So Lundy and her husband, Randall, have spent about \$60,000 on medical treatments since 2003.

They unsuccessfully appealed to the state Insurance Department, the state attorney general's office and the state Health Department on the grounds that state law requires mandated access to specialty medical care.

Lundy even filed a child welfare endangerment complaint against the insurance company for failing to provide medical services.

Univera Healthcare, the HMO covering the family, says it can't speak about individual clients. But it says its plan covers services by physicians who are board certified in their specialty by the American Board of Medical Specialties.

"If a physician is not a board-certified, recognized by American Board of Medical Specialties, they are not covered," said Dr. Jay Pomerantz, chief medical officer of Univera.

The board does not recognize environmental medicine. Since medicine is evolving, Pomerantz said Univera also regularly studies worldwide literature and medical studies in making decisions about coverage.

"The policies are continuously reviewed, every other year or sooner if need be," Pomerantz said.

That's not soon enough for Anne.

Baby born prematurely

Anne's long road started in December 2001, when she was born two months prematurely. By March 2002, she cried after nursing, depending on what her mother had eaten.

Lundy started removing foods like corn, soy and milk from her diet. Each time she did, Anne improved, she said.

When Anne started eating solid foods, she often developed diarrhea, hives and eczema. For eight months, Lundy started every morning by making tapioca bread sticks that were free of gluten, eggs, milk, corn, soy, nuts, and rice.

Today, Anne swallows dozens of allergy extracts daily to keep her from reacting to foods and chemicals.

"Nobody would ever do this treatment unless you have to," Lundy said. "Financially it's just devastating."

Lundy fears that Anne may not make it to the next childhood milestone. She believes with proper diagnosis as an infant, her daughter could have been eating normally by now. And to her, that's a crime.

It's not that simple. The medical community is not in agreement on the diagnosis or treatment for food allergies and chemical sensitivities.

Proponents say they have the studies to back up the therapy. Mainstream medicine says those papers don't prove empirically that the treatments work.

"They want a double-blind control study in a peer review journal," said Dr. Doris Rapp, a former clinical assistant professor of pediatrics at Buffalo State College. "It is very hard to get an article published in a peer review journal."

Rapp practiced in Buffalo for many years and brought the environmental medicine field to the forefront with her New York Times best seller, "Is This Your Child?" The book described discovering and treating unrecognized allergies.

Rapp mentored Dr. Kalpana Patel, who has run into the same problems Rapp did. Insurance companies don't cover some of Patel's services, including those for Anne.

"We are ahead of our time," Patel maintains.

Chiropractic example

The allergy field today practices firm and strong scientific, evidence-based medicine, said Dr. Stanley A. Schwartz, chief of the Division of Allergy, Immunology and Rheumatology of the University at Buffalo Department of Medicine.

Patients should consider the risk and the benefits to alternative therapies, he said.

"If someone can afford it and they want to try it and see if they get a benefit from them, fine," he said. "Often that has to be done on the patient's dime. The insurance company wants strict evidence that this works."

The question for Anne as well as health insurance companies is when does "alternative therapy" become mainstream treatment?

Years ago, most insurance companies refused to cover chiropractic services, which now are included in many plans.

At one point sublingual, or under the tongue, administration of medicine was not generally accepted by many physicians in the United States, Schwartz said.

That's how Anne receives her treatment. Lundy says she cannot bear to give the 4-year-old multiple injections every day.

Rapp gave allergy extract to children under the tongue, but it was not seen as effective by mainstream allergists. Today, the practice is being studied in the mainstream, Schwartz said.

"I want the public to get the best care possible," Schwartz said. "If the therapy is harmless and even has a potential benefit, I have no problem with it."

But Schwartz, who has never examined Anne or her records, says the condition of multiple chemical sensitivities "defies logic." While there are people who are very allergic, he said "they can't be allergic to everything."

Most care not covered

Rapp counters with her latest book, "Our Toxic World — A Wake Up Call," which maintains chemicals are harming the planet and everyone in it.

"Our bottom line in medicine right now should be to find treatments that are fast, easy inexpensive and safe," Rapp said.

Patel is treating Anne and hundreds of others. Most treatments are not covered by insurance.

"At this point, my patients are paying out of pocket," said Patel, who is president of the American Board of Environmental Medicine. "If they were not getting better, do you think they would come back?"

Anne did stop seeing Patel for about five months last year because her parents were having trouble coming up with the money. Anne's problems got worse and they returned in November, Lundy said.

"If our local health insurance companies understand what we are doing, we can prevent a lot of morbidity and future expense for the drugs," Patel said. "It is in the eye of the beholder, no matter how much evidence you have."

As for Anne, her parents have never told her the details of her medical condition. They're waiting for the day she gets better with Patel's treatment, so they won't have to.

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