Desensitization: a possible food allergy cure

By Andrea Acosta

Dr. Marc Cox, and his biology Ph. D. students Yenny Garcia (back) and Nathsuan Guy (front), look at a slide sampler.

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Catherine Silva, freshman environmental science major, knew that an alternate treatment for allergy control called desensitization was not FDA approved and was still being researched. However, she decided to undergo the treatment back in August, after being medically disqualified from the Air Force because of her peanut allergy.

"Personally I wasn't aware that food allergies were disqualified. I then had to switch my paperwork over to the Navy and put up for a waiver," Silva said. "My friends, who are currently enlist, told me that it was likely to have my waiver approved since they knew some soldiers who also suffered from allergies and had to carry around an EpiPen (a medical device that delivers epinephrine for extreme allergic reactions)."

After being hospitalized for the severity of her allergies back in high school and after having her first allergic reaction while eating a peanut butter sandwich at the age of 6, Silva, along with her parents, started looking for doctors who could help her.

"We began doing some research and luckily found Dr. Lyndon Mansfield here in El Paso, who specializes in allergies," Silva said. "He then informed us about the very serious private practice."

According to Silva, desensitization therapy can be seen as a food challenge where the patient is injected with small, diluted extracts of the allergens, which are mixed with grape juice. The dosage is gradually built up until the body is more tolerant and less sensitive to the specific allergen.

"The treatment would ask for two doses twice a day every day, and then visiting the doctor every week for a check up and an increase in dose," Silva said. "However, after the doctor would increase my dose, he would ask me to wait in the office for about an hour, checking my blood pressure and heart rate, to see if any severe reaction had developed."

During the first day of therapy, Silva was nervous. She said that the hardest thing was coming to terms with the fact that she would be taking a food that she knew was dangerous for her body.

"I couldn't help but be nervous, primarily because I had lived my life knowing that peanuts were something that were dangerous for me, and to all of a sudden just agree to take a dose of only peanuts with grape juice, was something that was confusing to understand," Silva said.

According to Silva, after her first few weeks, Silva found herself eating two to three peanuts every week, whereas she couldn't take more than 1/16 of a peanut before the treatment.

"Being that it is a slow-paced treatment, this ensures that patients won't have a near-death reaction," Silva said. "My doctor was very cautious about the amount of dosage he would give me each week."

According to Silva, it is unfortunate that food allergies don't receive as much attention as other sicknesses, making people unaware of how life-threatening allergies can be.

"I'm very happy I decided to go under this treatment, I have lifted a burden off my shoulders," Silva said. "I will no longer be in a situation where I will go into anaphylactic shock and be sent to the hospital. This desensitization treatment has opened the doors that were once shut for me, and I couldn't be happier."

**“My main focus and inspiration was being able to join the Navy.”**

- Catherine Silva, freshman environmental science major
All my friend had left to sell was a couple of chocolate bars with hazelnuts. I wanted to help her finish selling the bars and I wanted a candy. So after giving her half, we ate the bar together. A few moments later, I noticed that I was having a hard time breathing and my throat started to itch. I looked at my friend and saw that she was ok, so I felt confused and I began to panic. Luckily, the school nurse saw what happened and was able to stabilize my unknown allergic reaction.

It did not make sense since I had consumed candy bars with hazelnuts and peanuts before. According to my doctor, my immunoglobulin E antibodies was tagging some of the proteins that could not be digested as harmful. The process fools the immune system into thinking the protein is invading the body and as a response sends white blood cells to the protein causing the reaction, which is consistent with food allergies in general.

My doctor informed me that my condition is a mediated or classic case, which means I suffer from food allergies, but not severely. I have the classic case, Oral Allergy Syndrome, in which Type-1 people have hyper-sensitivities reactions commonly found in people with the atopic syndrome, a common combination of diseases like allergic rhinitis and conjunctivitis, eczema and asthma.

The syndrome also stems from an inherited component. In my case, my family and I have a history of eczema and asthma.

Allergic-specific immunotherapy or desensitization is the process in which an individual with OAS may slowly develop a tolerance for the allergen. The process is done through injection of small doses of the food and a substance to make your body's immune system to the substance.

According to case studies at the University of California Los Angeles, same procedure is being induced orally, but the results are inconsistent, this causes a concern for those eager to get past the inability to eat the food. Desensitization according to the case study is therefore considered a high-risk treatment and not part of standard procedure. For example, side effects to the oral procedure include anaphylaxis, or severe allergic reactions.

However, desensitization is not the only process being proposed. According to UCLA, "Engineered Proteins," may be an alternative solution into shaping the body's immune system into accepting the food during digestion. Engineered proteins are altered at the microscopic level in order to prevent the allergic antibody from reacting to the food, but they encourage the communication between the food and the lymphocytes.

According to Tim O'Shea and other sources cited in Heather Fraser's The Peanut Allergy Epidemic, a book on the development of peanut allergies, suggest that the source of the allergy has a connection with the double amount of vaccines since the '80s. By the mid 1960s peanut oils were implemented into vaccines and according to the books sources, the peanut oil would allow the immunization to last longer, and stronger.

Peanut allergies were already a common thing during the '80s, but in the '90s there was a surge of children having allergic reactions to foods with peanuts. According to Mandated Schedules vaccines in schools for children doubled from the '80s to '90s. In the 1980s the mandated number of vaccines was 20 and in the 1990s the number doubled to 40.

I feel that treatment is not where it needs to be because there are so many theories up in the air regarding food allergies treatments. I will just have to wait and continue living without nuts.
is only feasible because of the grant money Cox received.

"I spend more time in lab than I do any other activity, including sleep," said Cheryl Storer, doctoral biological sciences student. "For me, the driving force behind what I do is the knowledge that I am helping one out of every six American men who will develop prostate cancer in their lifetime. The project became real to me in 2009 when my dad was diagnosed with kidney cancer and underwent treatment. This knowledge impacted each and every one of the experiments I have conducted ever since," The research experience has been valuable to undergraduates as they prepare for graduate school and the world beyond UTEP.

"I feel extremely fortunate as an undergraduate student to be involved in research because I not only just enjoy it, but academically it has helped me to highly improve my understanding of the material seen in most science classes," said Marisa Salomon, senior cellular and molecular biochemistry major. "In Dr. Cox’s lab, I learned it is vital to work in science with a sense of morality and remain honest throughout your work and with fellow lab members." According to Cox, the subject of undergraduate research is one that is very familiar to him.

"Ninety percent of biology majors come in as pre-med; they all want to go to med school in the United States and it’s the same at UTEP," Cox said. "It was the same for me when I started college, but it was the research experience that I had as a junior that made me want to go to a Ph.D. program, and so ultimately the field I’m in now is highly related to the lab work I did as an undergraduate at the University of Missouri." Cox said he and his research team hope a major pharmaceutical company may become interested in licensing their technology and developing it further into drugs for the clinic, ultimately improving the lives of those who suffer from prostate cancer. As individuals, members of the team hope to use the knowledge they have gained to continue in the world of academia or in the work place. "I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience in researching prostate cancer at UTEP," Storer said. "I had the opportunity to share my cancer research experiences and to engage students in inquiry-based science on a bi-weekly basis for two years with early college high school students. I have also mentored seven undergraduate students in the Cox lab during my Ph.D. studies. These experiences have propelled me forward to pursue a career in academia, where I will focus on undergraduate biology education and inspire more students to pursue cancer research."

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A UTEP MBA student team placed second at the Regional SHRM Case Competition held at the Austin Convention Center on April 19 and 20. This is the first time full-time MBA students participated in the competition and the second time UTEP students have competed in a regional/national case competition.

Graduate Division Rankings
1. Thunderbird
2. UTEP
3. Texas A&M
4. University of Utah
5. Texas Women’s University

UTEP’s ONE members have been selected as the grand prize winners for Season 6, Part II of ONE Campus Challenge. Members will join students from last semester’s winners (BYU Hawaii and University of Virginia) in Washington D.C., for a grand prize experience this summer.

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### 2013 Spring Commencement

**Saturday, May 18, 2013**  
Don Haskins Center - The University of Texas at El Paso  
Commencement Ceremony Times:

- **9 a.m.**  
  Morning Commencement  
  College of Liberal Arts
- **2 p.m.**  
  Afternoon Commencement  
  College of Business Administration, College of Education
- **7 p.m.**  
  Evening Commencement  
  College of Engineering, College of Science, College of Health Sciences, School of Nursing

All ceremonies include graduate and cooperative programs corresponding to these colleges.

**THE DAY OF COMMENCEMENT**

1. **1. In order to experience an enjoyable Commencement ceremony, please arrive at Memorial Gym at least an hour prior to the ceremony.** Check-in will begin inside of Auxiliary Gym (room 120) at the following times:  
   - **For 9 a.m. Ceremony:** 8 a.m. (doors open at 7:30 a.m.)*  
   - **For 2 p.m. Ceremony:** 1 p.m. (doors open at 12:30 p.m.)*  
   - **For 7 p.m. Ceremony:** 6 p.m. (doors open at 5:30 p.m.)*
   
   *Please ensure that you have checked-in and picked up your reader card during these times.

2. **2. Arrive early and have a photo taken in Memorial Gym prior to the ceremony.**

3. **3. Please leave all personal items (backpacks, cell phones, purses, coats, etc.) at home or in your automobile.** These items (along with beach balls, balloons, confetti, noise makers, silly string, etc.) will not be allowed in the Don Haskins Center.

4. **4. Though your family and friends are an important part of commencement, child care services will not be provided, and children may not accompany graduates during the commencement ceremony. Please make appropriate plans for the care of your children.**

5. **5. Wear regalia and comfortable shoes, and out of courtesy for your fellow graduates, please remain for the duration of the ceremony.**

For parking recommendations, tips for families and friends and other information:  
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**THE PROSPECTOR**  
April 30, 2013

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**CURE** from page 1

Stomach pain or upset stomach can be some of the side effects patients can experience after taking their daily dose.  
"It obviously may not be the most pleasant food to eat after your meals or the best feeling, but the outcome is very much worth it and a life-changing event," Silva said. "It’s always a good feeling to have the confidence to turn down a snickers bar, not because I can’t eat it, but because I don’t like it."

I would recommend this treatment.

Although this treatment worked for Silva, it may not be for everybody. Monica Rodriguez, sophomore accounting major, who also has a severe allergic reaction to peanuts, said that she began to take small doses of it, but the severity of her reaction worsened.

"Since it really didn't work for me, I started to take my mom's home remedies such as milk, yogurt or ice cream; these foods would usually help me whenever I would have a mild allergic reaction," Rodriguez said.

Allergic to certain foods, Jackie Reed, alumni programs coordinator, said that she would be willing to participate in the study.

"Although my allergies, which are lettuce, mushrooms, walnuts, mango and celery, could be controlled by avoiding the food in question or eating a very small amount, I would still be interested in this specific desensitization treatment," Reed said.

According to Reed, practice should be limited to specific patients, such as someone with mild allergic reactions over someone who has very specific reasons for needing a cure, until more studies have been done.

According to Marilyn Rotwein, nutrition educator and sports dietitian at the UTEP Student Health Center, it is very important for students who suffer from food allergies to substitute foods with other healthy choices that contain the same efficient nutrients.

"There are eight common foods that comprise the majority of food allergies, according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, these being wheat, milk, soy, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish," Rotwein said. "These foods account for up to 90 percent of all verified allergic reactions. Wheat and milk can be two foods that can provide a risk if taken out of students’ diet."

Milk substitutes, such as fortified soy, rice and almond milk can be used, while wheat substitutes can include alternative grains such as oats, rye, barley, corn, buckwheat and quinoa.

"However, it is very important to note that many of the substitutes listed are less calorically dense than regular products, often lacking some nutrients," Rotwein said. "For students who are allergic to peanuts, be aware that foods such as egg rolls, enchilada sauce, marzipan, mole sauce, nougats, mandelonas and some cooking oils might contain some dosage of peanuts."

Silva recommends persistence as an important part of the process, since sometimes it would be hard for her to take her daily dosage.

"My main focus and inspiration was being able to join the Navy," Silva said. "Although I still have to eat peanuts, since I don’t know how my body would react if I suddenly stopped. Meanwhile, I eat a powerful peanut butter every other week, in order to keep increasing my tolerance to it."

Earlier this year, Silva was invited to "The Ricki Lake Show" in Los Angeles to talk about her personal experience and to increase allergy awareness.

"Silva, who is now being reconsidered by the Navy, said she will continue to spread the word about the importance of food allergy awareness."
The Grocery Gallery located at 305 Chihuahua, seeks to help local artists by giving them a space to exhibit and sell their artwork.

"It's a place where people can come and have a coffee or a panini and enjoy the art," said Ana Luisa Arias, owner of the gallery. "A place where people can really stay for long periods of time and eat and talk and appreciate, that's this gallery."

Arias said the gallery is open for any artist who wants to sell their art, whether they are just beginners or experienced artists.

"Any artist can come see me and we'll arrange to sell them here," Arias said. "Each exhibition stays up to a month and the artist decides the price."

As an artist and an art teacher for children with special needs, Arias felt that local art work needed a place to be exhibited and decided to combine a gallery with a bistro.

The Grocery Gallery has furniture made from recycled material.

"The tables and all are made up with recycled doors and painted to make the furniture, for example," Arias said. "I think it is important to show their [artists'] work, to lend a space to them or any artist."

The gallery also gives the opportunity for individuals who do not make art to sell little things by giving them an open space.

"We are trying to open up a space every Saturday for anyone who wants to come and sell their things like jewelry or art of the sorts," Arias said.

Monica Veleta, sophomore graphic design major, can be seen walking around campus or at his campus job always looking sharp.

Q. Where do you get your inspiration?
A. Basically, I just try to put on anything that matches, looks nice and something that feels comfortable. Ever since middle school they had us wearing the uniforms so I would always tuck in my shirt and I think that is what looks proper and professional for people to wear outside.

Q. Where do you get your inspiration?
A. I also work at Express so that is usually where I get my inspiration. I see the clothes that they put out and how they match them together and go from there.

Q. What influenced you to wear this outfit?
A. I like to look sharp, and when I come to school and see people wearing pajamas, I wonder why they are wearing that to school. I treat school like a job and I want to look nice for my job here on campus and I think if you dress nice, people and professors are going to respect you and open up to you more.

Q. Where do you like to shop?
A. I like Banana Republic because it is like Express too. It is a little more formal and has nice casual clothes. I also like Buckle because it has some t-shirts that I like and it is more rock-erish. You get to dress more casual for concerts and things like that.

Q. What is your favorite clothing brand?
A. Express because it is more formal. If I want to go out with my friends or something it is perfect for how I like to dress.

Ernie Chacon said simple touches like tucking in your shirt allows you to dress simple, yet sophisticated while at school.

"I am a senior multimedia journalism major, can be seen walking around campus or at his campus job always looking sharp.

Q. Why do you like to dress up for school?
A. I do not dress up every day but I like dressing up sometimes because people respect and acknowledge you more. My professors will say that I look nice and people that dress in their pajamas just look lazy and do not want to be here. When you go to class dressed up, it looks like you are ready to learn.

Q. Has fashion always been a part of your life?
A. I would say it has since high school. That is when I started realizing that I should dress nice so people could recognize and notice me more.

Q. Do you have any fashion advice for men?
A. I would say to buy pants that fit, tuck in your shirt, and put on a belt so you can look more classy and professional. I see too many guys with pants that are baggy and that just looks lazy and like they do not care.
The Student Alumni Association is hosting their second annual Miner Soak Down on May 2, an event where students can have fun in a water balloon fight. The event will be held at 5 p.m. at the Sun Bowl stadium. Miner Soak Down is considered UTEP’s largest water balloon fight.

The idea for a huge water balloon fight was brought about by the Christian Student Fellowship at the University of Kentucky, who set a world record in August of 2011 against the previous Brigham Young University.

Focusing the event around one water balloon fight is the key improvement from last year’s Miner Soak Down, which had included five games for a minimal fee. This year a committee of eight students had the whole spring semester to plan and think about what would be more beneficial for the attendees.

“This year we totally eighty-sixed the water balloon games and we’re just focusing on the water balloon fight,” said Allie Martinez, coordinator of the event and junior corporate and organizational communications major.

Last year making 2,000 water balloons took four pumps, placing them into plastic containers and transporting them from the Peter and Margaret de Wetter Center to the Geology Lawn. This was quite the hassle, Martinez said.

In order to use five times as many balloons, SAA is partnering with the Better Opportunity for Single Soldiers Program at Fort Bliss, an enrichment program for soldiers. They will help fill the balloons simultaneously at the stadium with an extended system of plastic pipes.

Although filling thin balloons for four hours and three days before the event may seem like a lot, the process will be much easier with the balloons already at the location.

“Last year we tried everything so that (the water balloons) wouldn’t pop,” said Justin Tompkins, senior criminal justice major. “It happens that when you move them, all of them stick together and the friction causes them to pop which makes us just lose balloons. This is why we’re going to fill them at the Sun Bowl!”

SAA is hoping that many students take advantage of the Thursday evening event.

“Students come to school, go to class and then they leave because they have to go to work or whatever the case may be,” Thompson said. “This is right before dead day so students have this one day to get crazy before finals and plus it’s on a Thursday since usually Fridays are not busy.”

“First thing you want to do is get rid of the water balloons already at the location. This is going to be awesome,” Martinez said. “We have an awesome venue, it’s right before dead day so students have this one day to get crazy before finals and plus it’s on a Thursday since usually Fridays are not busy!”

Paul Sanchez, freshman criminal engineering major said he is ready to have a few hours of fun.

“I have not been a part of Miner Soak Down (before),” Sanchez said. “I am looking forward to the support of the students and how big the event can get; Miner Soak Down can become an annual tradition with the support.”

“With few major events in May at the university—besides commencement—SAA is hoping to have a big attendance,” Martinez said. “SAA worked alongside UTEP Athletics and the Academic Technologies Department to promote the event. Academic Technologies developed the Miner Soak Down website. The establishment of online registration and advertising through Campus Events emails registered 150 students only within a few hours. Meanwhile JAM Entertainment will be hosting a warm-up to rally energy, and Blue Meanie will play music alongside the Mistress of Ceremonies, Monica Castillo, an on-air personality for Power 102.

“With the fight to take place after 6 p.m., a 10 second countdown will ready the students that are going to be divided into two teams representing the colors of the university: orange and blue.

“We just want everyone to have fun, this is going to be awesome,” Martinez said. “We have an awesome venue, it’s the Sun Bowl. The big point is for students to come out and have fun.”

For more information on the event or on registration, visit minersoakdown.utep.edu.
End of season marks new trend

A native from Ijebu Ode, Nigeria, junior sprinter, Abiola Onakoya started running track at a very local level in his hometown.

"Nobody ever thought something could come out, like an athlete from that area," Onakoya said. "Which proved many people wrong."

Borning to a family of six, four brothers and one sister, Onakoya was expected to follow his father's footsteps and become a tennis player. However, Onakoya never developed a passion for tennis. He tried out basketball for four years, but then one day he saw some people running on the track. Interested, Onakoya made a life-changing choice to run track.

Onakoya began to make the national team since 2009 and became the 2012 Nigerian Champion in the 400. He clocked in a personal best 45.89 seconds.

"Moving down to UTEP, it's been a life-changing choice to run track," Onakoya said. "I had many offers from different schools. Many from other countries, but I don't know. Something just kept that telling me that I belonged at UTEP I finally found my dream here."

At the beginning of the 2012 indoor season he was part of the 4x400 meter relay team, which took gold at the C-USA Championships. He finished fourth in the 400 with a time of 48.31 seconds.

Junior sprinter, Abiola Onakoya listens to assistant coach, Leon Settle, give instruction to him and his teammates before practice April 29 at Kidd Field.

"Having a new coach really changed our mentality," Trierweiler said. "We have the technique, we know how to play the game, but we were not in the right mindset. With Coach Roberts, we are more confident and play tougher, which has translated into wins for us. We were just missing that one thing and now we have it."

At the end of June 2012, former assistant coach at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, Roberts was appointed as head coach for the UTEP tennis team, replacing Victor Aguiar, who had held the position for the past two years.

Despite a strong start to the season, the Miners fell short at ITA Texas Regionals held Oct. 17-21, but closed out the fall season with four singles victories at the New Mexico Invitational.

The Miners took the opportunity after the fall season to get well prepared to compete against their springtime opponents. However, despite the improvement in their performance, the season still proved to be a growing period for the Miners, with an equal amount of wins and losses.

UTEP opened the spring season with a win against Dominican University but was setback with two consecutive losses against San Jose State and the University of San Francisco.

The Miners bounced back from the losses with wins against Drake University and the University of South Dakota, but were once again unable to keep the momentum going as they hit a streak of losses against Milwaukee, Northern Arizona, University of the Pacific and the University of New Mexico.

In the outdoor season he ranked 29th in the nation after taking second place at the C-USA Championships. He finished 23rd at the NCAA West Preliminaries.

The Miners ended their season with an overall record of 12-12. UTEP has not seen such an improvement in wins since winning six in 1994 to 1995.

A new coach and a new attitude may prove to be a growing period for the Miners, with an equal amount of wins and losses.

"Being tough and playing hard are the primary factors for us," Trierweiler said. "We were just missing that one thing and now we have it."

The Miners went on a roller coaster of matches in the 2013 Conference USA Championships, where they faced off against at Southern Miss, Alabama State, and Utah State.

Reaching the end of the season, UTEP headed to Houston to compete in the 2013 Conference USA Championships, where they faced off against at Southern Miss, Alabama State, and Utah State.

The Dallas Cowboys had a decent draft. The team obtained center Travis Frederick (Wisconsin) which will immediately help boost the offensive line. The Cowboys also got a cornerback, BW Webb (William & Mary) and safety Jll Williams (Georgia Southern), which were major needs in the team.

The teams also brought in a very good wide receiver, wide receiver with the Browns (Baylor) but lacked a pass-rusher and some additional help for Tony Romo (Baylor) in the offensive line, which should be of prime importance for the team.

Although not as much talent as in the 2012 class, this year's NFL draft definitely had a variety of stories worth following, and in the end most teams did well when selecting.

Three offensive tackles were chosen in the first four picks of the draft. Eric Fisher from Central Michigan was the overall No. 1 pick and will play for the Cleveland Browns. Only 11 quarterbacks were selected this year, and to the surprise of many E.J. Manuel (Syracuse) was selected by the Buffalo Bills. It was the overall No. 1 pick and will play for the San Diego Chargers.

For the most part, teams did good in the draft taking care of filling the voids in their teams. Possibly the best ones were the San Francisco 49ers and Baltimore Ravens. The 49ers got quarterback Colin Kaepernick (San Jose State) and running back Lance Johnson (Arkansas), who was a victim of an online dating hoax earlier in the year. Despite being projected as a first round pick, Tuel was selected early in the second round by the San Diego Chargers.

Despite not having as much talent in the 2013 class, this year's NFL draft definitely had a variety of stories worth following, and in the end most teams did well when selecting.

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April 30, 2013

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April 30, 2013

Jerrod Niemann
Saturday, May 11 • 7 P.M.

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