Scientist George Preti sniffs out causes of oder-related diseases

his patients sniffing. He snuffles under their armpits, takes deep whiffs of their necks and slowly sniffs up and down their bodies

'Mmm-hmm," he says, jotting down notes. "OK, take a deep breath and exhale into my face."

Preti can get a good idea of what the problem is from using a single diagnostic instrument: his nose. Preti, who counts himself among America's experts on body odor, is a specialist at the Monell Chem-

ical Senses Center in Philadelphia, where more than

taste and chemical irritation. The 31-year-old nonprofit center is the only one of its kind in the nation. And while the researchers' job duties at times bor-

der on the revolting, their work provides crucial information about disease, dangerous chemicals and food safety, Anita Pickus of the National Institutes of Health said.

"It's basic science that they're doing there," Pickus, senior adviser of the agency's Office of Rare Diseases, "To know what these simple mechanisms are,

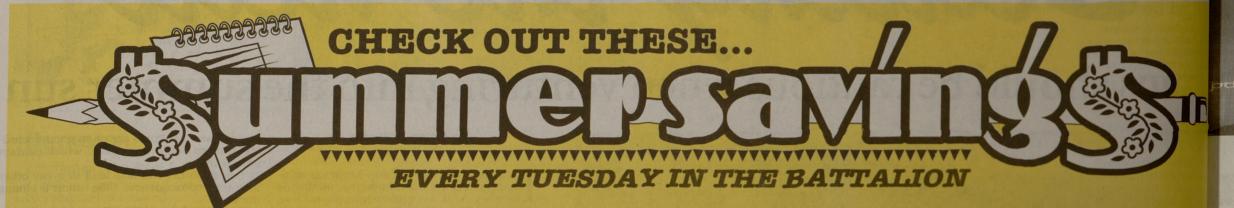
For many, the center's research is their only hope for a better life.

On a recent day, Sandy Gordon walked into Preti's office with three plastic containers filled with her urine. Afflicted with trimethylaminuria, a rare disease that can make a person smell like rotten fish, Gordon turned the samples in for tests.

"Dr. Preti was my last hope," she said. "When I found out what I had, I just broke down crying. I came here thinking I was the only person w problem. Now I know it's not something ashamed of.'

For Preti to truly gauge human smell, patient stop wearing deodorant and perfumes five decodorant and p fore an exam. They also are told only to show unscented Ivory soap and to stop shaving armpits. The night before the exam, patients stop brushing their teeth.

SEE SMELL ON P.





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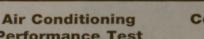
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