



NEW YORK: In this undated image provided on Saturday Aug 29, 2015 by Mount Sinai Hospital shows Dr Vivek Reddy as he checks the screen while doing a surgery to implant the new tiny wireless pacemaker at the Mount Sinai hospital. — AP

## STUDY: TINY, WIRELESS PACEMAKERS COULD BE A SURGERY-FREE OPTION 'ANOTHER LANDMARK IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PACEMAKERS'

**LONDON:** A tiny, wireless pacemaker could offer some heart patients a surgery-free alternative to the traditional devices, a new study says. Some doctors, however, say there are lingering safety questions and warned patients not to rush to get the new technology. Unlike traditional pacemakers - which need a generator and wires and are implanted via surgery - the new pacemaker is a wireless tiny tube that can be attached to the right side of the heart using a catheter inserted through the leg. "This is another landmark in the development of pacemakers," said Dr Christopher Granger of the American Heart Association, who was not part of the new study. Still, he said doctors need time to learn how to use any new technology to avoid potential problems. "I would tell patients to be careful of being one of the first to get this

unless there's a compelling reason," he said. In the new research, doctors in Australia, Canada and the US implanted the mini-pacemaker into more than 500 people. After six months, nearly 7 percent of patients reported side effects including the device poking holes in their heart. In comparison, about 10 percent of patients who get regular pacemakers suffer complications. The study was published online yesterday in the New England Journal of Medicine and is being presented at a meeting of the European Society of Cardiology in London. The research was paid for by the pacemaker's manufacturer, St Jude Medical. The miniature pacemaker is already approved in Europe and the new study will likely be submitted to the US Food and Drug Administration.

**Number of complications**  
A study of the device in Europe, however, was twice stopped last year and in May when a worrying number of complications were reported, including one case where the device got dislodged and stuck in the artery leading to the patient's lungs. A similar pacemaker made by Medtronic is also licensed in Europe. While most pacemakers have wires connecting the device to the right and left sides of the heart, the new device sits in the right ventricle and doesn't coordinate the two sides. Experts estimated the tiny new pacemaker might work for up to 30 percent of patients. Many doctors in Europe are still wary of the new device, which is at least double the price of a regular one. Dr Jose Ramon, president of the Spanish Society of Cardiology, said his hospital only

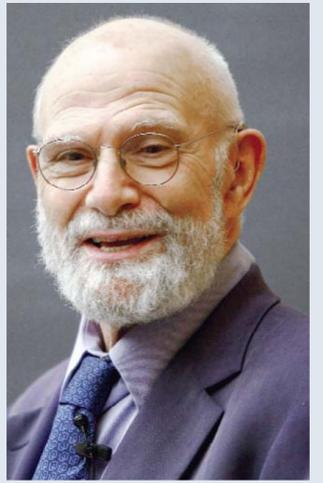
implanted the new pacemaker in about a dozen patients last year, compared to approximately 500 patients who got a traditional device. The tiny pacemaker also lacks some functions that are standard for normal devices, like tracking irregular heart rhythms. "It can't monitor patients remotely, so they have to go to the hospital for checks," said Dr Jagmeet Singh, a spokesman for the American College of Cardiology. Still, Dr Vivek Reddy of Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, who led the new research, said he expected the device to be approved by the FDA. "Patients are going to want this new pacemaker," he predicted. "It's up to doctors to talk to their patients about this, but patients will want (the smaller pacemaker) once they know about it." — AP

## RENOWNED NEUROLOGIST OLIVER SACKS DIES AT 82

**NEW YORK:** Renowned neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks, who explored the mysteries of the human brain in a series of best-selling books, died yesterday at age 82, the New York Times reported. Sacks' longtime personal assistant, Kate Edgar, told the Times he died at his home in New York after a battle with cancer. Sacks was the author of the 1973 book "Awakenings," which detailed his real-life experience with patients who suffered from a condition known as encephalitis lethargica, and how they were able to exit-however briefly-from their catatonic states with the aid of a drug.

The story was adapted into a 1990 Oscar-nominated film of the same name starring Robin Williams and Robert DeNiro. Sacks announced in February that he had been diagnosed with terminal cancer after a rare melanoma of the eye diagnosed nine years earlier was found to have spread to his liver.

"I feel grateful that I have been granted nine years of good health and productivity since the original diagnosis, but now I am face to face with dying," he wrote in an essay in the New York Times opinion page. "It is up to me now to choose how to live out the months that remain to me. I have to live in the richest, deepest, most



productive way I can." Born in London, he was educated at Oxford and then emigrated to Canada, then to the United States, arriving in New York in 1965 where he taught, wrote and practiced for the rest of his life. — AFP

## CONTACT LENS MAKERS TAKE PRICE LAW FIGHT TO COURT

**DENVER:** Contact lens makers struggled to defend their pricing policies in a federal appeals case that could have wide-ranging effects on the \$4 billion industry. At issue is a Utah law banning minimum prices for contact lenses. The nation's largest contact lens companies - Alcon Laboratories, Johnson & Johnson and Bausch & Lomb - asked the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver to strike down the measure.

They said the law was crafted to help a homegrown discounter, 1-800 Contacts, but has the effect of changing lens pricing nationwide. "It says to 1-800 Contacts, you can sell to a consumer in Florida, and you can utterly disregard what the manufacturer says the price should be," said David Marriott, lawyer for Alcon. But the judges repeatedly challenged the lens makers' assertion that Utah's law bans price minimums in other states. The judges grilled the contact lens lawyers about why they don't simply stop doing business in Utah if they insist on price minimums. "Where's the burden the state of Utah is conferring on out-of-state retailers?" asked Judge Jerome Holmes. A lawyer for Utah accused the contact lens makers of nationwide price-fixing and said lens prices would drop as much as 35 percent nationally if the manufacturers dropped price minimums. "The state of Utah has said, 'We are getting rid of a price-fixing scheme,'" said Parker Douglas, who called the lens makers "conspirators."

its law discriminates against out-of-state retailers, who wouldn't be allowed to use their price minimums at a hypothetical store in St George. Douglas insisted that the ban on price minimums is no different than states enforcing different minimum wages or other state-specific laws they're allowed to enforce.

After temporarily blocking the law earlier this year, the 10th Circuit allowed the measure to take effect as the case unfolds. 1-800 Contacts, one of the country's largest discount sellers, has since dropped its prices by up to \$15 a box on some brands that were subject to the manufacturers' minimum prices. The contact lens manufacturers say the Utah law violates interstate commerce regulations because it allows 1-800 Contacts to ignore price minimums in online sales to customers outside state. Utah argues those are considered in-state transactions, no matter where the customer is.

The contact lens makers started setting minimum prices about two years ago to protect eye doctors from being undercut by discount sellers. If a company sells at too steep of a discount, the manufacturers pull their products. Though most contact sales still come through eye doctors who bring the manufacturers new customers with brand-specific prescriptions, discounters have taken a bigger slice of the market in recent years. The companies say the pricing policies are good for customers, but they've also been scrutinized by Congress, consumer advocates and others. — AP

**Price minimums**  
Judges asked Utah's lawyer about whether



SALT LAKE CITY: In this May 13, 2015, file photo, a contact lens is displayed in front of a 1-800-Contacts shipping box. — AP

## PROJECT-BASED STUDENTS REMAIN MORE ENGAGED

**CEDAR RAPIDS:** In the first year of broad implementation in Cedar Rapids schools of project-based learning programs, participating students were more engaged and in some cases more academically successful than their peers, district data show.

The programs at the Iowa BIG high school and the option programs started last year at Roosevelt Middle School and Jefferson High School allow students to spend part of the school day learning about English, math and other subjects through large-scale business and community projects, rather than traditional lessons. Similar initiatives are starting this year at Johnson STEAM Academy, now a magnet elementary, and Metro High School. The idea, said associate superintendent Trace Pickering, is that when students are given more freedom with their schedules and the projects they work on, they will be more passionate about what they learn and more likely to retain the information. Preliminary test score and survey data seem to support that argument.

At Jefferson High last school year, the percentages of students who were proficient on the Iowa Assessments were higher among option students than among non-option students by more than 20 percentage points, across science, math and English. In addition, a greater percentage of option students met test score growth targets than their non-option peers, across three subject areas. However, the school did not have data on 13 percent of the non-option students because those students had attended a different school the previous year.

At Roosevelt Middle, students in the schools' optional program rated themselves on the ACT Engage questionnaire as having greater academic discipline and commitment to school, and better relationships with school staff, than non-option students. And at Iowa BIG, 95 percent of students the school surveyed said they felt a greater sense of ownership in their learning after their experience there.

Academic data for the Roosevelt program and Iowa

BIG were inconclusive, Pickering said. On Thursday at Iowa BIG, students heard pitches for possible projects from several community and business groups, including OPN Architects, the city of Cedar Rapids and Van Meter Inc. Projects last school year included an urban orchard and Success to the power of She, an empowerment initiative for young women.

The school has received more project ideas this year than it has students to work on them, Pickering said, so the pitches were competitive. Iowa BIG has 92 students this school year up from about 70 last year with most of them attending for two or three class periods each day, he said. Two students are attending full-time, in a pilot program testing whether the school can provide a comprehensive education. Iowa BIG students said Thursday they liked the freedom the school offers. In school, teachers can force you to learn, said Parks McBride, 15, a first-year Iowa BIG student who also attends Washington High. Here, you have to drive yourself to get an education. — AP

## PLANNED PARENTHOOD: A Q&A OF THE STORY BEHIND CONTROVERSY

**LOS ANGELES:** Planned Parenthood Federation of America is defending its abortion practices and its donation of fetal tissue for medical research. It sent a letter Thursday to congressional leaders and included a report by experts it hired who found that undercover videos of its officials were heavily altered by anti-abortion activists.

The move was the latest development in a heated dispute that has riled people on both sides of the abortion debate. The videos were produced by a California-

based anti-abortion group called the Center for Medical Progress, which began releasing them in July. Here are answers to some of the questions at the heart of the controversy.

### What does federal law say about it?

Federal law prohibits abortion providers from profiting from the sale of fetal tissue, inducing someone to have an abortion to provide the tissue, or altering the procedure in any way to harvest fetal tissue. Medical researchers use the tissue to study a wide

array of treatments, therapies and vaccines.

### Is Planned Parenthood profiting illegally?

Planned Parenthood denies the center's claims that it illegally sells and harvests organs. The undercover videos show Planned Parenthood employees discussing reimbursement costs, which is legal. Planned Parenthood said in its letter to Congress that clinics receive \$45 to \$60 to recoup costs in California. Some clinics provide the tissue to university researchers for no fee. **Is there any evidence that doctors alter abor-**

### tion procedures?

Planned Parenthood claims it does everything by the book. Videos show Planned Parenthood officials discussing different abortion techniques. In one video, Dr. Mary Gatter, one of Planned Parenthood's medical directors, discusses a "less crunchy" technique to increase the chances of recovering intact organs. One example Planned Parenthood offered of video manipulation involved a Planned Parenthood official in Texas discussing lab protocols intended to maintain tissue. However, the group's experts said the video was manipulated through editing so that it sounded like she was talking about altering abortion methods to help harvest organs.

### How many Planned Parenthood clinics provide fetal tissue for research?

Fewer than 1 percent of 700 Planned Parenthood affiliated clinics nationwide offer fetal tissue donation for medical research, the organization said. It is only available in California and Washington state. An Oregon affiliate provides placental tissue to a university, and clinics in Texas and Colorado have provided similar tissue over the past five years, but not fetal tissue, Planned Parenthood said. In addition to abortion services, Planned Parenthood also provides birth control and screening for sexually transmitted diseases.

### What did experts find in the anti-abortion group's videos?

Research firm Fusion GPS said experts it hired on behalf of Planned Parenthood found it was impossible to determine how much the edits to the video distorted the meaning of what was said during the meetings. Glenn Simpson of Fusion GPS said the video work was "sloppy at

best" and that transcripts provided by the center were inaccurate and erroneous. It said the footage had no evidentiary value in an inquiry unless the original material was provided to investigators.

### Does the center for medical progress face any scrutiny?

California's attorney general, a Democrat running for US Senate, is investigating whether the nonprofit behind the videos violated registration or reporting requirements, or broke any other state rules. The center also faces a lawsuit in Los Angeles County Superior Court that alleges it violated the privacy of StemExpress, a Northern California company that received fetal tissue from Planned Parenthood until it severed ties after the videos began surfacing. StemExpress lost its bid to block the nonprofit from publicizing the video, but a judge said it will likely prevail in its lawsuit that claims its executives were illegally recorded.

The National Abortion Federation is suing the Center for Medical Progress and its officers in federal court in San Francisco. The lawsuit claims conspiracy, fraud, racketeering, misrepresentation and trespassing over what the federation alleges was an elaborate scheme to discredit and endanger its members, who were secretly recorded during professional conferences.

### What happens next?

In Congress, four committees are investigating Planned Parenthood, and Republicans plan to take another stab at stripping the group's federal funding. Some conservatives are vowing to reject the budget legislation that funds the federal government this fall unless funding for Planned Parenthood is removed. — AP



BERLIN: In this March 23, 2007 file photo, Knut, the polar bear cub, has its first public appearance with his keeper in the Berlin zoo. — AP