



## Putting bedbugs to bed

By giving blood weekly to her life partner's bug experiment, SFU scientist Regine Gries has all but given us the gift of freedom from bed bug torture.

PHOTO COURTESY: SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

**B**edbugs (*Cimex lectularius*) are infesting not only low-income countries but also expensive hotels and apartments, and public venues such as stores, theatres, libraries and public transit in industrialised countries.

Simon Fraser University biologist Regine Gries has found a solution to get rid of these nasty creatures. Her arms have provided a blood meal for more than a thousand bedbugs each week for five years while she and her husband, biology Professor

Gerhard Gries, searched for a way to conquer the global bedbug epidemic, *Science Daily* reports.

Working with SFU chemist Robert Britton and a team of students, they have finally found the solution—a set of chemical attractants, or pheromones, that lure the bedbugs into traps, and keep them there. It is expected to be commercially available next year.

Their research has been published in *Angewandte Chemie*, a general chemistry journal.

**A** hug-a-day keeps the doctor away? According to new research from Carnegie Mellon University, it may not be that far-fetched of an idea.

The researchers found that greater social support and more frequent hugs protected people from the increased susceptibility to infection associated with being stressed and resulted in less severe illness symptoms.

"Being hugged by a trusted person may act as an effective means of conveying support and that increasing the frequency of hugs might be an effective means of reducing the deleterious effects of stress," wrote Sheldon Cohen, one of the lead authors of the study.

Cohen and his team chose to study hugging as an example of social support because hugs are typically a marker of having a more intimate and close relationship with another person.

The study was published in *Psychological Science*.

## Hugs help protect against stress, infection



PHOTO COURTESY: WIKIPEDIA

## Giving your thumbs superpowers

**W**hen people spend time interacting with their smartphones via touchscreen, it actually changes the way their thumbs and brains work together, according to a report in the *Cell Press* journal *Current Biology*. More touchscreen use in the recent past translates directly into greater brain activity when the thumbs and other fingertips are touched, the study shows.

A team of researchers led by Arko Ghosh of the University of Zurich found that the electrical activity in the brains of smartphone users was enhanced when all three fingertips were touched. In fact, the amount of activity in the cortex of the brain associated with the thumb and index fingertips was directly proportional to the intensity of phone use, as quantified by

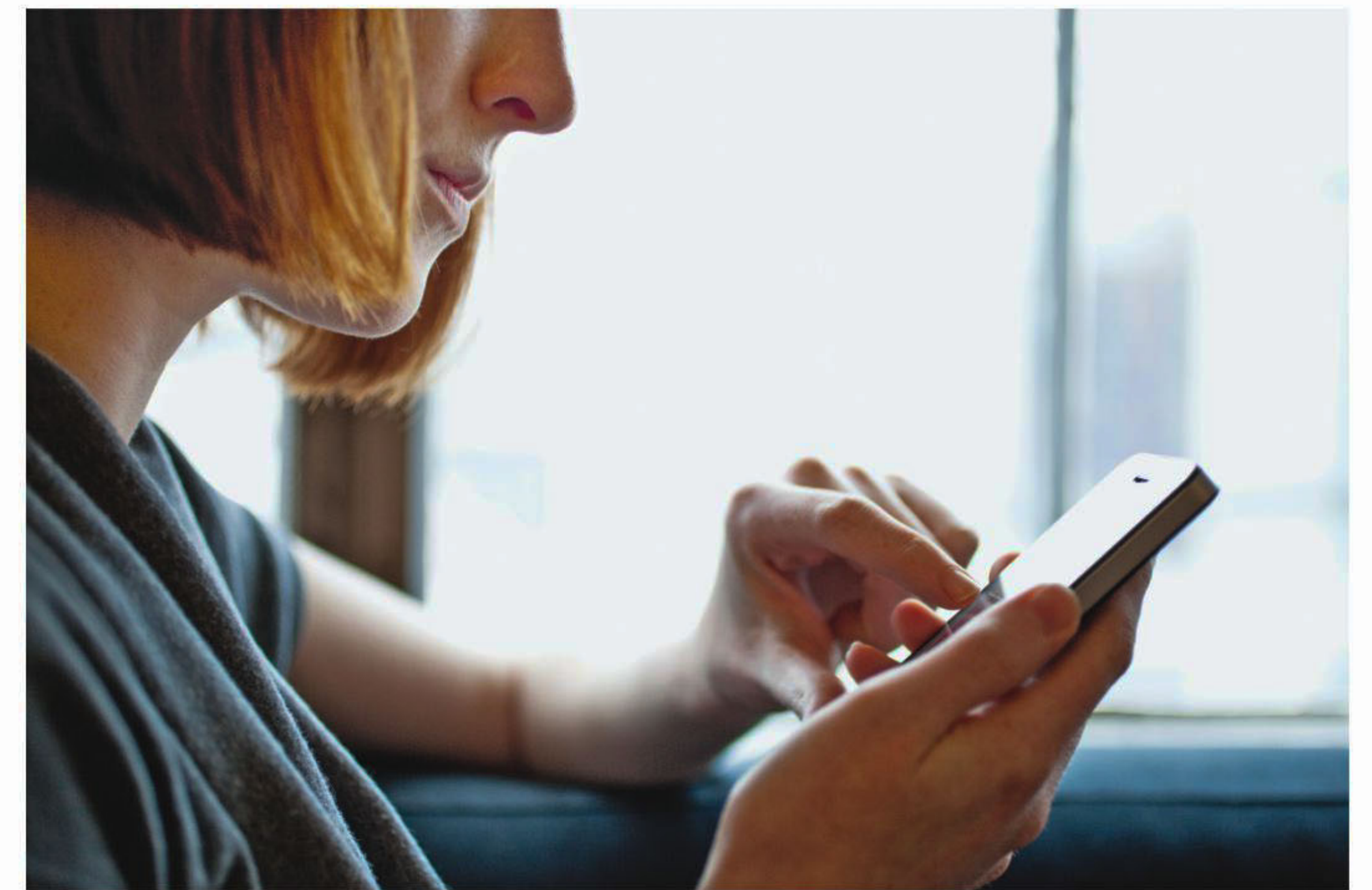


PHOTO COURTESY: WIRED.COM

built-in battery logs.

Ghosh and colleagues, however, noted evidence linking excessive phone use with motor dysfunctions and pain.

## Can you balance on one leg?

PHOTO COURTESY: SOHOMOD.COM

**S**truggling to balance on one leg for 20 seconds or longer was linked to an increased risk for small blood vessel damage in the brain and reduced cognitive function in otherwise healthy people with no clinical symptoms, according to new research in the American Heart Association's journal *Stroke*.

"One-leg standing time is a simple measure of postural instability and might be a consequence of the presence of brain abnormalities," wrote Tabara, lead author of the study which did not assess participants' histories of falling or physical fitness issues, such as how fast they could walk or any gait abnormalities.



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