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or two per week," she said. Ann discovered her herpes in September of 1985. "I thought sure there must have been some mistake. I had been seeing the same person... I just kept thinking, 'God, this can't be happening to me.'"

Mary, an upper-income professional, contracted herpes over the summer and searched

their greatest time of need, Simon said. A question Pursley and Simon find common with herpes sufferers is how to deal with their sexuality in conjunction with the disease. Ron says he was a fairly promiscuous person before he contracted herpes six years ago. "I was due for a case of herpes. I

it," she said. But there is a tendency for people to be embarrassed and tentative telling partners especially when they are first confronting the situation themselves. "It's easy for someone to turn you down when you say, 'Oh God, you really won't want me when I tell you this...'" Simon said.

The real crime lies with those who know they have herpes but continue sexual relations without alerting their partners. Ron says it takes a lot of courage to begin to address the illness. "Some people won't tell anyone they have it. They carry it and are so egocentric that they give no thought at all beyond satisfying their own animalistic urges," he said.

"It takes a lot of responsibility because outbreaks aren't always visible," Pursley said. "You make a choice within yourself. It's better to deal with it than to carry around the guilt and fear. It's better than having a wonderful night on the weekend, then waking up the next day thinking, 'Oh God, am I going to get a phone call?'"

But in some cases, talking with partners about having herpes acts as a strange sort of screening tool, according to Simon. If someone with the virus is meeting new people and is rejected because of it, this may put up a warning flag about that person, Simon said. "How would that person deal with a crisis in life?"

Most herpes sufferers agree this is the most difficult aspect of the disease to deal with. "It isn't the physical symptoms that are hard. I get outbreaks every two or three months when I'm under extreme stress, but they are usually very mild," Ann said.

After initial outbreaks, which are usually in the form of painful sores or blisters in the genital area, the herpes virus migrates to groups of nerve cells called ganglia near the spinal column or brain. When the body is under stress, the virus causes new lesions or outbreaks. It is at this time that genital herpes is highly contagious.

There is often confusion between herpes simplex virus 1 (HSV-1) and herpes simplex virus 2 (HSV-2). HSV-1 usually surfaces as the common cold sore, but can be transmitted to the genitals through self-inoculation or oral sex.

Ann got genital herpes this way. "Most people have no idea that they can get genital herpes if their partner has a cold sore on their mouth," she said. She feels it was her own ignorance about the virus that got her into "this mess," as she calls it, and she sometimes wishes she could make people understand how painful unkind remarks and jokes about herpes are.

'There is such a God-awful stigma attached to the virus, yet it's not fatal, and it's not extremely infectious.'

— Carolyn Pursley

out a support group after receiving inadequate attention from her doctor. "He was not very helpful. I was depressed, and my social life was a disaster. My boyfriend wouldn't talk to me. He basically abandoned me," she said.

It was at this point that Mary contacted Simon, whose name appeared on a flyer for the support group. "I called Sharlene in tears. She was wonderful — she told me I would make it," Mary said.

And slowly but surely, Mary is making it. With the help of the support group, she is gaining confidence about her disease and has been able to discuss and examine her relationship with her boyfriend, she said.

He no longer avoids her and the two are taking an extended vacation together over Christmas.

But many who contract the virus are single with no established partner. It is these people who need information as soon as they find out, Simon said. The support group has distributed flyers about the group to local gynecologists in hopes of attracting people in

was pretty loose and easy-going. I dated a lot, then people started noticing that I was showing up stag to everything."

Now things are different for Ron, who has abstained from sex for six years. And it isn't just society's reaction to herpes that makes it difficult but also women's negative reactions. "I usually anticipate rejection, and you usually get what you anticipate.

"I've been out of circulation so long that I've become kind of aseptic. I'd probably get scared if something came along," Ron said.

The problem lies in finding a delicate way to tell a potential partner of the disease. "It's all in how people perceive themselves. I'd always relied on being sexually competent. Now I don't have that strong carpet of self-esteem," Ron said.

Pursley agrees that the answer lies with how a person deals with it themselves. "I have fairly frequent outbreaks, but I haven't had a man not want to be with me for a long time. When you accept it yourself is when others accept

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oversees the OAA, to allow the OAA to take on sexual orientation cases from start to finish.

Without such a mandate, the OAA was only able to give general counseling and pointers to students with a sexual orientation grievance, Kaplan said.

The OAA could not represent students with sexual orientation disputes fully because the majority of students with such disputes have student-against-student complaints, and since the OAA is funded by incidental fee money, it cannot take on such complaints.

"Not only am I barred from representing one student against another, but if the discrimination took the form of a conduct code violation, this office would have to provide defense services to the alleged discriminator, so I obviously could not help advance a grievance against someone my office was going to be representing," Kaplan said.

Lucille Seibert, equal education specialist from the OAA, said while sexual orientation was in the OAA Equal Opportunity in Education and Employment policy, the office could not process a formal sexual orientation grievance.

"Years ago, when it was listed by the University that it was prohibited to discriminate against a person because of their sexual orientation, the University looked at our caseload and decided that we were already handling many discrimination complaints based on race, gender and disability, so it was decided that we wouldn't take on the additional grievances that came through that would be based on sexual orientation," Seibert said.

"Lucy Kaplan did an excellent job of bringing this to everyone's attention. Sexual orientation grievants had nowhere to go for formal resolution until now," she added.

Students with sexual orientation grievances can go to the OAA and receive advice on how to respond to a person they feel is discriminating against them on their own or can ask the OAA to talk to the person for them.

"If the discrimination was based on a misunderstanding or ignorance, I would work to educate the people involved and let them know that their action is considered prohibited discrimination," Seibert said.

"If the student doesn't really think that will resolve the situation, then I can assist them in writing up a formal complaint," Seibert added.

A formal grievance complaint involves the student writing down what happened to him or her and signing the complaint.

The OAA sends the student's letter along with a letter of transmission to Olum. The letter of transmission lists the authority by which the grievance is sent and the basis for the complaint, such as race, age, religion or sexual orientation.

Olum then gives the letter to the appropriate vice president who appoints an investigation officer, who is given 30 days to investigate the complaint and write a report of the findings of the investigation.

Olum, or the appropriate vice president, will determine what sanctions will be imposed. Sanctions can range from a letter in a personnel file, or a letter to the student, to termination or suspension, Seibert said.

A student can go to the OAA with an informal grievance and ask that an informal resolution take place without his or her name being mentioned.

"This method tends to be the one that works best when the alleged harasser was ignorant of how their actions were being perceived — in effect, if it was unintentional," Seibert said.

A person can also call for advice on how to handle a situation without giving their name.

Once a student does give his or her name, confidentiality is assured by the OAA, Seibert said.

If a student feels he or she has been treated differently because of sexual orientation, they should document when and where it happened. Also, they should list any witnesses, Seibert said.

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