

Some Ducks
still swim
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County AIDS testing policy frustrates activists

Health officials say confidentiality is stringent

By Jolayne Houtz
Of the Emerald

Editor's Note: This is the second installment in a three-part series on AIDS. Today's article will look at the controversy surrounding AIDS testing in Lane County. Friday's article will discuss what it is like to have AIDS and where people with AIDS in Lane County can turn.

A controversy over the best method of testing people for AIDS has sparked a battle between county health officials and AIDS activists frustrated with a testing policy they say is inadequate.

Health authorities say their confidential testing program, in which the person being tested must give a name and address to health officials, is effective in drawing in people for testing, but local AIDS activists say the county has barely scratched the surface of its AIDS problem.

Lane County has been testing about 25 people a month since the program started several years ago, about five of whom test positive for the AIDS antibody each month.

But according to national figures, about 2,400 people in Lane County will be potential carriers of the AIDS virus in eight months, double the current number of carriers.

Under the county's confidential testing program, only about 120 of those potential carriers will be identified, said

Scott Seibert, chairman of the Mid-Valley Action Committee, a Eugene-based AIDS awareness group.

"Lane County is going to wait until it's just too damn late to catch (the disease's spread), and then cry help," Seibert said.

A statewide, three-month, experimental testing program, which began in December, promises to provide some answers to the question of how to draw in the largest number of people in high-risk groups for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome testing.

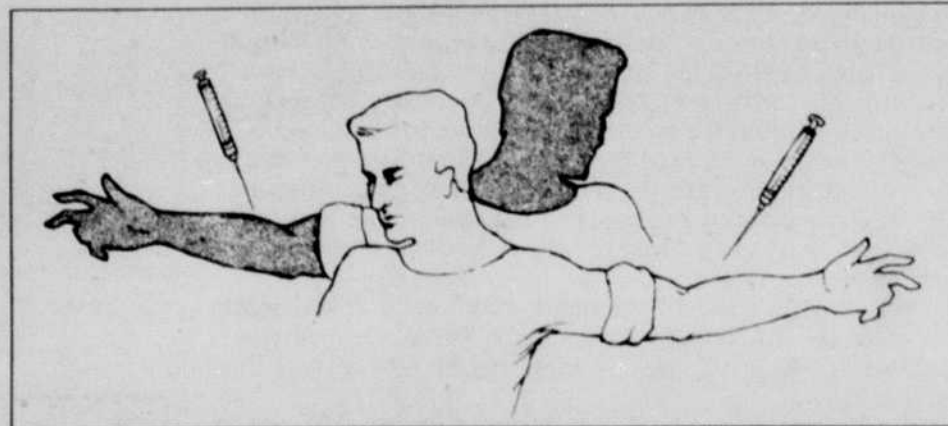
All counties in the state are experimenting with anonymous testing for AIDS, with the exception of Lane, Linn and Benton counties, which chose not to participate.

Dr. Dave Fleming, deputy state epidemiologist, said although health officials had hoped all counties would join the experimental testing program, they now will be able to compare the demand for anonymous testing with the demand for confidential testing.

Oregon will be one of the first places to make a comparison between the two types of testing, Fleming said. "The results of this test will be relevant around the country," he said.

If the state's experiment proves successful, one Lane County health official has said the county would reconsider its decision.

AIDS is a virus that destroys the



Graphic by Lorraine Rath

body's immune system, leaving the person susceptible to other diseases. The virus primarily has affected gay and bisexual men, prostitutes and intravenous drug users. Some children born to women with AIDS also have contracted the disease.

The World Health Organization estimates there will be 500,000 to 3 million AIDS cases by 1991.

While current state law requires only that the names of individuals who have contracted AIDS be reported to the state Health Division, the state AIDS Policy Committee is split over its recommendation against requiring the names of individuals who have AIDS-related complex (ARC) or who test positive for the AIDS virus to be reported to health

authorities.

The 1987 state Legislature will consider the committee's recommendations and could accept or reject any part of it. Only a handful of states have laws requiring the disclosure of names of individuals who have ARC (a set of illnesses that can precede the disease), or who test positive for the AIDS virus.

The majority of committee members recommended anonymous testing in the committee's draft report, but a minority report called for reporting the name of anyone testing positive to the AIDS virus.

The majority report says anonymous testing will encourage high-risk individuals to take the test and obtain

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Emerald Hall soon to be razed, replaced by new science building

By Stan Nelson
Of the Emerald

After 40 years of varied service, Emerald Hall is finally being laid to rest.

The former military barracks and University administrative building is being torn down to make way for the University's new \$45.3 million science complex.

But before the demolition can begin, some asbestos-containing, exterior siding and pipe insulation must be removed in accordance with strict health and safety procedures designed to prevent exposure to asbestos and contamination in the environment, said Tom Hicks, University environmental health officer.

"Things are going very well," he said, noting that the project is more than 75 percent completed. In addition, air sample results near the area indicate that asbestos levels are below the required contractual specifications, he said.

J.P. Environmental of Portland, one of two firms retained by the Oregon State System of Higher Education to handle asbestos removal in state system structures, is responsible for the project.

The company has already removed all external siding and should be completed with the



Photo by Shu-Shing Chen

A warning sign hangs in front of Emerald Hall, where workers are removing asbestos-containing exterior siding and pipe insulation.

internal asbestos removal by Friday or the first part of next week, Hicks said.

Plastic sheeting has been installed on all the outside entrances of Emerald Hall to minimize the quantity of airborne asbestos released from the building. And with the use of fans, negative air pressure is created inside the building to reduce the escape, Hicks said.

Internally, asbestos will be removed from pipes, tanks and valves in two mechanical rooms, and the rooms will be

enclosed in plastic sheeting.

Workers will enclose sections of pipe in "glove bags" that allow them to insert their hands to cut, wrap and remove asbestos insulation while it remains inside the sealed plastic enclosures.

Asbestos from Emerald Hall is being sent to the Short Mountain Landfill in Lane County for proper disposal, Hicks said.

Once the asbestos has been removed safely, Emerald Hall will be torn down, most likely

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Musician seeks to aid Costa Rican rain forests

By Carolyn Lamberson
Of the Emerald

A former University student and local musician is concerned about the diminishing rain forests of Costa Rica.

Bob Seawick spent three-and-one-half weeks in the Central American country last November learning about a problem he had been hearing about increasingly during recent years.

"Two or three years ago, I didn't know there was a problem with the rain forests," he said. "Then I heard that Burger King was buying up land in Costa Rica, cutting down the forests and raising cattle."

"What I learned when I got down there was that there is a major problem," he said. "Scientists estimate that within the next five years there will be no more rain forests in Costa Rica, a country the size of West Virginia."

On a world-wide scale, Seawick said, all the rain forests will vanish by the year 2050 if measures are not taken to stop their destruction. He added that scientists give the Amazon rain forest, the largest in the world, 50 years until it will resemble the landscape of Mars.

Some people may see the problem of diminishing rain forests as minor, said Seawick, but he sees it as a major problem that must be dealt with immediately.

"It's one of those 'we have to do something now before it's too late' situations," he said.

"I'm concerned with the survival of the planet. There is a delicate balance of nature, and by disturbing the rain forests, we are tipping that balance in a dangerous way," Seawick said.

"This is one of the richest ecosystems in the world," he said. "For example, there are more species of butterflies in Costa Rica than in all of Africa. Costa Rica has 848 species of birds, which is 80 more than in all of North America."

Seawick believes the consequences of the elimination of these rain forests are too great to ignore.

"Entire new species of plant and animal life are being found everyday. Many of these plants that only grow in the tropical climates are used in medicine. By destroying the plants, we may be losing valuable cures to diseases for future

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