

## HETEROSEXUALS AND AIDS

by Chris Ramko

"Heck, no, I can't get AIDS — I'm not gay, and I don't shoot smack."  
Surprise, surprise.

Many heterosexuals live in fear of AIDS, for all the wrong reasons. Some people feel that it can be transmitted just through shaking hands, or other such contact. These are, oddly enough, usually the same people who believe that only gays and IV drug users can contract it. Many people, according to U.S. polls, believe that it's an act of God. Still others **know** that they don't have it and won't get it, even though they've had sexual contacts in the past few years totaling into double or triple digits.

Well, just because you're heterosexual and/or not an IV drug user doesn't mean that you're immune to the human immunodeficiency virus group, HIV for lack of wind. Taken by itself, that information doesn't even mean that your chances of contracting HIV are less. All it really means is that you're not gay and/or you don't do IV drugs. Even a person's degree of promiscuity, by itself, is a poor indication of their relative risk.

On the other hand, there is no reason to become paranoid and run screaming to the health center for the tests simply because your significant other just told

you about the other serious relationship s/he was in four years ago.

So what is a good indication of risk? Well, put all of the factors together. The virus is relatively difficult to keep alive outside of the human body — it dies pretty quickly upon exposure to air or water. Body fluids are the only known transmission vectors. In addition, if you're a robust, healthy individual, not very susceptible to illness, the chances of you contracting HIV, even if you're exposed to it, are even less. In a reported study by the Centers for Disease Control, less than 0.2% of health care workers with accidental needlesticks or mucous membrane exposure to infected blood or body fluids seroconverted. Seroconversion means that the virus takes up residence in the "helper T-lymphocytes", a certain type of immune cell.

However, sexual contact seems to be able to spread the virus very well. So what's the best defense? Well, you've heard it before and you may not like it, but abstinence is the most sure way. Barring that, a monogamous relationship is best, and, if you don't like either of those, the condom seems to be the way to go — still pretty risky, but much better than nothing.

## AIDS TESTING

That's how I felt when I finally realized what all those health officials meant by "risk behaviors". I kept thinking, maybe I should get tested, just in case, because, well, I've done a few of those things a few times. When I first started hearing about AIDS I thought, oh, that couldn't happen to me! But now I've realized it's not who you are, it's what you've done. And ever since I realized that, I've been worried. Hmm...wonder if I should get tested?

**IF YOU'VE BEEN WONDERING, MAYBE IT'S TIME TO TALK TO SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP YOU DECIDE. SEE THE RESOURCE GUIDE ON THE BACK PAGE OF THE WELL NOW FOR FACILITIES WHERE COUNSELING AND TESTING FOR HIV (THE AIDS VIRUS) IS AVAILABLE.**

## DATE RAPE

by  
Mary Ellen Bennett

It's probably no longer a surprise to most people that the majority of rapes, particularly among college populations, are not committed by masked strangers hiding in the bushes, but are, in fact, most often perpetrated by a "friend" of a woman, or by some previous acquaintance from a class or party. These rapists, our peers and fellow classmates, hardly fit the traditional image of a rapist in our society. Unfortunately, this seeming incongruence often works very much to the advantage of the rapist.

Rape is an ugly reality that, unfortunately, every woman and man needs to understand. Rape, whether it is committed by an acquaintance or by a stranger, is not a product of overwhelming lust or uncontrollable desire. It is, instead, a crime of power, of anger, and most frighteningly, of violence. This aspect of rape is commonly misunderstood. Date rape, in particular, is even more misunderstood by the public, by its victims, and by its perpetrators.

Probably the most persistent problem associated with date rape is simply its identification, or lack of, particularly amongst its victims. Because the woman involved knew her attacker previously, and may have agreed to go on a date with him, some people mistakenly assume that **she** should be held responsible for her harrowing experience. This rationale is seriously flawed. Not only does it place the blame squarely on the shoulders of the **victim**, but it completely neglects the role of the rapist in this cruel and

serious crime. This grave misunderstanding is a source of much additional and unnecessary emotional anguish for a date rape victim.

Surprisingly, date rape is more likely to occur between a pair that already knew each other on the first date, than between relative strangers on a first date. Furthermore, a date rape may not occur on a first date, but on a subsequent date. Knowing this, a woman may be less surprised and more prepared to deal with a date rape situation, regardless of where in the dating sequence it occurs. Following a few basic rules of thumb will reduce the likelihood of a date rape occurring.

Express your feelings clearly. Don't try to "read" his signals, and don't expect him to "read" yours. Instead, share your feelings, especially if they are feelings of discomfort or anxiety, and encourage him to share his as well. Remember, we can't control our feelings, but we can control how we act on them.

Plan an active role in planning your dates. Choose together activities that you can both enjoy, and that provide ample opportunity for communication. This shouldn't, however, include activities that require you be alone with him on "his turf" (in his car or in his apartment).

Finally, it is never wise, on any date, to abuse alcohol or any other drug. Besides impairing both your judgment and his, intoxicating substances also diminish your ability to defend yourself, should the need

arise.

The intent of this article is not to discourage people from dating and becoming intimate, but is to provide safe and comfortable guidelines for doing so. It is also not intended to alienate men from women, or breed contempt or suspicion. For every man who has, or would consider, committing a rape, there are many more men who consider it the horrifying waste that it is.

Fortunately, these men can also play an active role in preventing the likelihood of date rape. They too can encourage honest communication with their dating partners. They can choose to respect a woman's feelings, and to take more time to understand her feelings. They can also choose **not** to adopt or perpetuate attitudes that sexualize or demean women, or attitudes that condone aggression towards women. Men Against Rape, a campus organization, promotes these choices, and provides a variety of educational services to community groups and University classes interested in learning more about sexual assault. Their office is downstairs in Suite 1 of the EMU.

If you believe that you have been sexually assaulted in the far or recent past, consider calling the Rape Crisis Network at 485-6702. They too provide community education services, as well as victim advocacy, referrals for legal aid, and referrals for emotional counseling. Their 24-hour crisis line is 485-6700.

## Contraceptophobia!?!

by Patty Fahlstrom

What? A new disease? Hardly. Just a fancy word to describe the modern condition afflicting vast numbers of college age students around the country. It is a condition that is unnecessary, and one that could easily be remedied.

Contraceptophobia, or the fear of using a reliable contraceptive when planning for, or taking part in sexual activity, is a phobia that can stem from a variety of thought patterns. Each one is generally related to outside pressures whether they be social, political, or parental.

There are many reasons for this lack of responsible preparation, and below are a number of them:

- \* erotophobia, or the fear of sexuality.
- \* fear of admitting sexual activity, after all, our parents said that it was wrong.
- \* embarrassment or shame may surface if anyone ever finds out.
- \* romance . . . sex is supposed to be romantic, isn't it? Birth control certainly doesn't sound romantic. After all, romance means spontaneity, doesn't it?
- \* inconvenience. Birth control means that I have to confer with my partner, and I hate to bother them for nothing.
- \* irrational thoughts: "I won't get pregnant, it won't happen to me".
- \* lack of forethought: "I won't be participating in sex in the near future."

Most of the reasons mentioned above seem unreal to the major of sexually active college students, but the fact is, many of our peers are blind to their irrational thought patterns. They don't seem to realize that they are setting themselves up for unwanted pregnancies and a host of other possibilities. It is a fact that four out of five sexually active women, who do not use a reliable form of contraception, find themselves pregnant. This amounts to over one million pregnancies each year. This is definitely not a group that most career-oriented college women would like to be a part of.

If you are not striving to become an honorary member in this prestigious group, consider the fact that the only way to insure yourself is to plan ahead and prepare for the sexual encounter with some form of contraception.

Remember, talking about birth control is not the same as using...talking won't protect you against pregnancy.

## RIDDLE

Man? Woman? Child? It knows no difference. It judges not sexual orientation because it cannot reason. Like any of its kind, it cannot distinguish people — it merely exploits opportunity. What is it?

ANSWER: Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) the cause of AIDS: It's not who you are, it's what you do.