

NEWS BRIEF

Bill would reduce HIV deaths, study says

The proposed Early Treatment for HIV Act of 2003, sponsored by Senator Gordon Smith, R-Ore., received a boost with the release of a study stating the bill would greatly reduce HIV death rates.

The result of the study conducted by PriceWaterhouse Coopers state the act would cut down the death rate for people with HIV on Medicaid by 50 percent over 10 years, according to a press release from Smith's office.

The bill, which was introduced in April 2003 and is still pending action in the Senate Finance Committee, would give Medicaid coverage to low-income, HIV-positive individuals before they develop AIDS. States would also benefit

through greater federal funding toward treatment for HIV.

According to the study, care provided through the act would delay HIV progression into full blown AIDS, increase HIV positive individual's life expectancy and be highly cost-effective.

Eugene's HIV Alliance Executive Director Diane Lang said the act would greatly benefit people with HIV.

"It's really a smart thing to do, both compassionately and economically,"



Smith

Lang said.

She added clients have already been affected due to cuts in the state budget, and many are worried they will be unable to afford their treatment if the Oregon Health Plan changes.

If the health plan were to change, Lang said HIV patients wouldn't be automatically eligible for treatment. They would have to prove disability as a result of their health deteriorating because of AIDS in order to qualify for medical assistance.

"That really is a death sentence for people with HIV because without the drugs it's a fatal disease," she said. "With the drugs, it's a manageable, chronic disease."

— Ayisha Yahya

West Nile

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— mosquitoes lay eggs in standing water — can produce a thousand mosquitoes in a week.

Lind suggested many methods to reduce the number of mosquitoes around a residence. Some include eliminating mosquito breeding grounds like unused tires, buckets, large puddles and other areas where water accumulates or stands for more than two days. Water in birdbaths and children's pools should also be refreshed often.

People can take other protective measures, Lind said, such as putting screens on windows, wearing long-sleeve shirts and long pants during peak biting times like dusk and dawn, and wearing effective mosquito repellent.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Protection, most people who are infected will at worst mild symptoms. Mild infection

symptoms include fever, headache and body aches, with possibilities of a skin rash and swollen lymph glands. More severe infections may cause West Nile encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. Severe symptoms include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, disorientation, coma and seizures. Death, though possible, is rare. The illness usually begins five to 15 days after the mosquito bite. There is no vaccine or specific treatment, but supportive care can be given in a hospital.

Tamara Wilhite of Lane County Public Health Services said anyone who suspects they have contracted the virus can speak to a doctor, who would administer a serum test and send it to state laboratories in Salem. Results would be processed 36-72 hours later. Results showing positive signs of West Nile virus would have to be finalized by the CDC, which could take up to two weeks.

"This doesn't alter the treatment the patient receives because the pa-

tient would already receive supportive care the whole time," Wilhite said.

Pesticides have been used as a measure against mosquitoes in states such as Texas and New York, but Wilhite explained that they are not considered an effective tool against mosquitos.

"It doesn't make a lot of sense to do it, because most pesticides not only kill

es, but other insects that animals rely on for food," Wilhite said.

Wilhite added pesticides could hurt natural predators of mosquitoes, such as fish, bats and dragonflies. She also noted that Lane County did not have the funds to use extensive amounts of pesticides.

"Most mosquitoes don't travel very far from their home," Wilhite said. "The best thing to do is to cut down on standing water around your house."

CAMPUS BUZZ**Thursday**

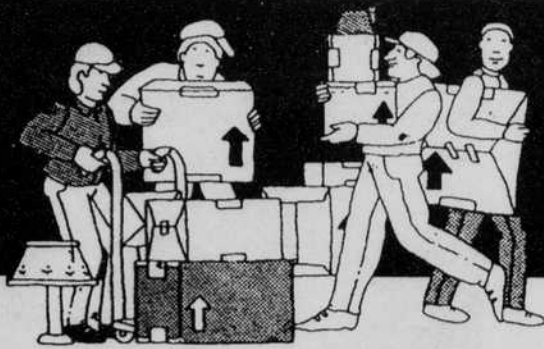
University Outdoor Program trip initiator's clinic, 7:30 p.m., the Barn (East 18th Avenue and University

Street), free. For more information, contact Suzanne Hanlon at 346-4365.

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