

# just news

## Health departments offer anonymous HIV tests

B Y W. C. M c R A E

After a year of debate between health officials and gay activists, all but three county health departments in Oregon are now offering anonymous tests for antibodies to HIV. The state health division, particularly Administrator Kristine Gebbie, had previously urged the adoption of "confidential" testing, for "epidemiological reasons."

Reasoning that those in high risk categories would be more likely to take the test if fear of discrimination due to breach of confidence were removed, gay and AIDS activists pressed for "anonymous" testing. Anonymous testing involves numbers rather than names in record keeping.

Larry Foster, Oregon State Epidemiologist, advised that people interested in having HIV antibody tests may call their county health departments and request the test. An appointment

will be made, and to insure that the usual registration processes are circumvented, a number will be assigned to the individual. A meeting with a trained counselor will also be arranged.

The counselor will answer questions and discuss the issues of the test. The testee will then make the choice of having the test anonymously or confidentially. If the test is confidential, the testee will be asked to supply a name and specific epidemiological information. If the test is anonymous, a number will be assigned to both the laboratory sample and the testee.

Results are available about a week after testing. Anonymous results are released only in person (never over the telephone) at which time counseling and advice are offered. If the test is positive, the testee will be made aware of further resources within the community.

Foster reports "some increase" in HIV testing since counties began offering anonymous tests early in December. ●

## New procedure stops HIV

An enzyme, peptidase-t, which blocks entry of HIV into the T-4 cell has been administered to patients with AIDS and has stabilized their conditions, according to NPR's "All Things Considered" (Dec. 24).

Recently discovered by a scientist at the National Institute of Mental Health in Washington, D.C., the enzyme was given to AIDS patients at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden.

A spokesperson for the Karolinska Institute said that the patients, who were given the enzyme in late November, have shown little or no improvement. Their conditions have not deteriorated, however, he said.

The patients were in the last stages of the disease and were not expected to have survived, according to the spokesperson. The enzyme, which shows no signs of side-effects, will be experimentally administered to AIDS patients in the United States within the next few months. ●

## AIDS vaccine ready for human testing.

An AIDS vaccine is ready for human trials, the National Cancer Institute announced in late December, according to the *Village Voice*, 12/30/86. Dr. Allan Goldstein, of George Washington University, has isolated HGP-30, a synthetic protein that Goldstein and his colleagues claim can neutralize HIV, the AIDS virus.

Previously, a vaccine for AIDS was not thought imminent, since vaccines normally

work by making antibodies to proteins located on the outside surface of a virus. The outside envelope of HIV, however, changes constantly. HPG-30 works by making antibodies against a stable protein, p17, located just underneath the HIV virus' shifting surface. Antibodies to p17 have neutralized HIV in human blood in test tubes. HPG-30 contains no virus, unlike a live vaccine, and won't itself cause infection. Goldstein hopes to begin the tests (he will be amongst the first injected) within the month. ●

## Minnesota governor signs executive order

Since November 19, Minnesota lesbian and gay state employees have been protected from discrimination based

on sexual orientation; on that date Governor Rudy Perpich, a Democrat, signed an executive order protecting gays and lesbians in state employment, according to the *Washington Blade*.

Perpich, a Roman Catholic, was re-elected to his second full term in November. He is the only governor to sign an executive order protecting gays and lesbians in 1986, and the eighth since 1975 when Milton Shapp of Pennsylvania

signed the first. The other states whose governors have signed executive orders are California (Jerry Brown, 1979), New York (Mario Cuomo, 1983), Ohio (Richard Celeste, 1983), New Mexico (Tony Anaya, 1985), Washington (Booth Gardner, 1985) and Rhode Island (Edward DiPrete, 1985). All executive orders, except Rhode Island's, have been signed by Democratic governors.

The Minnesota order also contains language which specifically protects employees against discrimination based on "AIDS status, including testing..." ●

## Privacy appeal denied review

The Washington Supreme Court notified the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) on December 9, 1986, that it has decided not to hear the party's appeal of a lower court order to disclose internal meeting minutes. The court gave no reason for its refusal to consider the radical party's arguments against revealing confidential records demanded by a hostile ex-member suing the FSP.

In response to the decision, defendant and Seattle FSP Organizer Doug Barnes charged the Supreme Court with "ducking its responsibility to protect the rights of the FSP and of any group to get together and speak openly on matters of mutual concern."

"The Washington Constitution has even

stronger privacy provisions than the U.S. Constitution," noted Barnes. "But," he added, "our state's justices, elected to uphold our rights, are instead lining up with the federal administration's program of forced drug testing and bedroom snooping."

The order to disclose minutes was issued in Superior Court in October of 1985 as part of pre-trial discovery in *Snedigar v. Hoddersen, et al.* Former member Richard Snedigar brought this suit against the FSP and nine prominent community activists in an attempt to recover a donation made to a party fund. Snedigar and his attorneys have also demanded membership lists, names of contributors, and other constitutionally privileged records. ●

## Gay \$ withdrawn

Despite an order from United States Attorney Anton Valukas to "cease and desist," organizers Frank Kellas and Marge Summitt say they will continue stamping "Gay \$" on the money handled by their businesses according to *Gay Chicago Magazine*. Kellas and Summitt began stamping "Gay \$" on currency in protest of the Chicago City Council's failure to pass a gay rights ordinance in July.

The US Attorney acted at the request of Lakeview Bank officials, who refused to re-circulate currency stamped "Gay \$" and had asked the government to rule on the legality of marking the currency. (Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 475 prohibits marking any "notice or advertisement whatsoever" on any "instrument, obligation or security" of the United States.)

In the weeks following the US Attorney's order, hundreds of thousands of dollars already have been withdrawn from the Lakeview Bank; total withdrawals are expected to reach into the millions of dollars.

Summitt and Kellas commented on the government's actions by issuing a prepared statement which says (in part): "Somehow an administrator which cannot seem to find 30 million CIA dollars has discovered GAY dollars, and decided that gays and lesbians should be prohibited from expressing their desire for justice on US currency." ●

## Insurance commissioners approve guidelines

The National Association of Insurance Commissioners approved guidelines last month that would prohibit insurance companies from denying insurance coverage to individuals on the basis of sexual orientation. The approved guidelines, however, do allow insurance companies to use AIDS antibody tests with the consent of the applicant.

The guidelines were adopted after representatives of the Association met with officials of the National Gay Task Force (NGLTF) and the National Gay Rights Advocates. The NAIC sexual orientation guidelines specifically prohibit health insurers, life insurers and investigative agencies from using gender, marital status, living arrangements, occupation, medical history, beneficiary and zip code as proxies in determining sexual orientation.

Also prohibited for use in underwriting decisions are "medical records or a report from an insurance support organization [which] show that the applicant has demonstrated AIDS-related concerns by seeking counseling from health care professionals."

"It's the first time that a national body of state officials has voted to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation," said Benjamin Schatz, Director of the NGRA AIDS Civil Rights Project. "And AIDS related discrimination, when directed toward the gay and lesbian community, is immoral, illegal, and medically counterproductive," he added.

Schatz and Jeff Levi of NGLTF were instrumental in developing NAIC's sexual orientation guidelines. The guidelines have been endorsed by the American Council of Life Insurers and the Health Insurance Association of America.

The NAIC adopts model laws, model "bulletins," and insurance guidelines that assist in establishing industry standards and policies. NAIC's sexual orientation guidelines are in the form of a "bulletin" to be sent out by state insurance commissioners to insurance companies doing business in their state.

(Ed. note: *The Oregonian* [12/12/86; page A22] covered the story above and ran it with the headline: "Rules to bar AIDS bias." Think about it.) ●

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**Cascade AIDS Project**

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