

Just news

AIDS world: The Yankee Plague

While Americans have persuaded themselves that AIDS is a gay disease, other nations are characterizing AIDS as an American disease.

B Y W C M c R A E

In Japan, the death of the first Japanese woman from AIDS has sent that country into panic. Prostitution is tolerated in Japanese culture. However, the woman who died was a prostitute living near an American army base, according to the *New York Times*. Homosexuality is also accepted in Japan, but the blame for bringing AIDS to the island nation is being laid to American servicemen. After her death, the woman was pilloried in the Japanese press as getting what she deserved for having dealings with foreign men.

Likewise, AIDS in the Philippines has been characterized as an American disease introduced by servicemen. China also sees the disease as a purely Western phenomenon, and the Chinese government is now requiring all foreign students, as well as returning Chinese students, to submit to HIV tests.

South Korea, gearing up for the 1988 Olympics, is requiring HIV antibody tests of all restaurant and entertainment work-

ers. The testing will begin in those areas frequented by US troops.

In Italy, safe sex is providing politicians with another opportunity to thumb their noses at the Pope. The Italian Defense Ministry is issuing condoms to members of the Italian Armed Forces in order to prevent the spread of AIDS. The decision is contrary to positions held by leading factions of the Italian government and of the Catholic Church, and is seen as a snub to both.

Last month, the Christian Democrat health minister said, "Anyone who catches AIDS now has gone out of his way to get it." The defense minister is prepared to face the criticism, according to the *London Times*. In the same week, a Catholic official, and personal friend of Pope John-Paul II, wrote that AIDS would have a beneficial effect on society by making people more chaste.

In England, where homes of gay men have been firebombed recently, the government announced plans to require HIV tests of all immigrants.

Sexual practices and risk of AIDS exposure

The *Journal of the American Medical Association* recently published a study concerning the correlation between certain sexual practices and the risk of exposure to the virus that causes AIDS. In layman's terms, if you continue to be the passive partner in anal sex without using the minimal protection of condoms, you can die.

Another important finding in the data obtained from the study is that it shows "a strong positive association between numbers of male sexual partners and seropositivity (exposure to the virus)." Hopefully, this is already known to many men in the community.

By comparing two groups of men, one group having had no anal/genital contact for two years previous to the study and the other group having practiced various patterns of anal/genital contact during the two years previous to the study, it was determined that "those practicing receptive (anal/genital) contact, whether exclusively or combined with insertive contact, the adjusted relative risks (of exposure) were significantly elevated."

Of the four types of rectal trauma studied, only douche or enema before sexual contact contributed to the risk of infection by receptive anal/genital contact. This finding is consistent with observations made in a similar study of 1980 concerning the association between douching and Hepatitis B infection. Although this study did not show a direct correlation between "fisting" and risk of

infection, contradictory evaluations of "fisting" are available.

The study was conducted during the period from June, 1984 until January 1985 using a cohort of 1034 single men 25 to 54 years of age by the San Francisco Men's Health Study, and appears in the January 16, 1987 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The participants were taken from the 19 census tracts of San Francisco where the AIDS epidemic has been most intense.

The report noted that even before the findings of this particular study, extensive efforts had already been made in San Francisco to encourage homosexual/bisexual men to limit the numbers of their sexual partners and the practice of unprotected anal/genital contact. There is evidence that these efforts resulted in substantial changes in sexual practices among homosexual/bisexual men and a reduction in other sexually transmitted diseases.

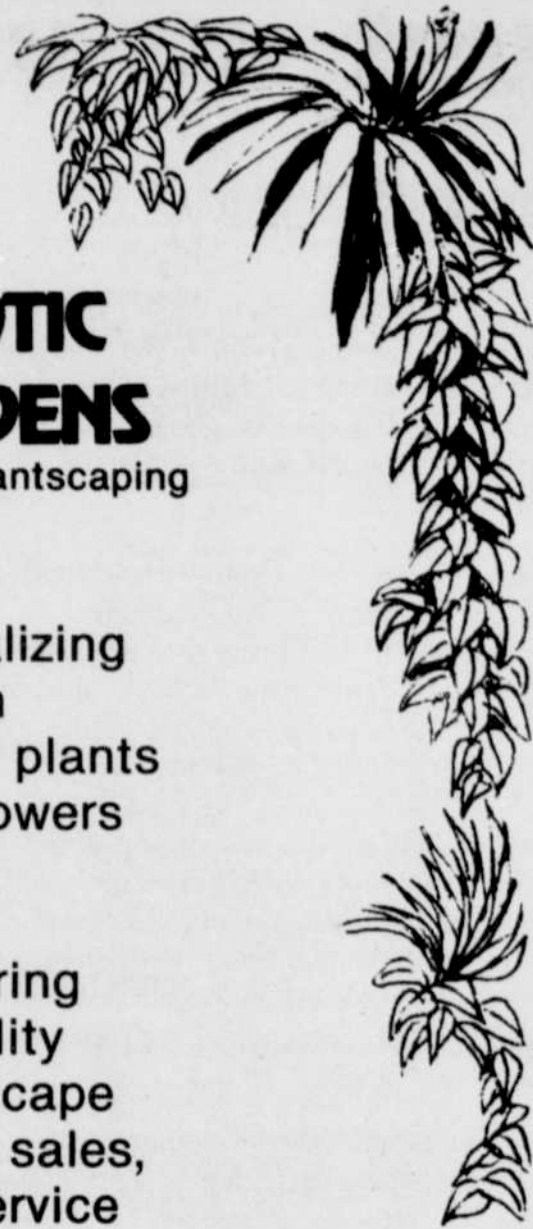
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