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come from strengthening the body, not poisoning it. Do not take, prescribe, or recommend AZT."

The *New York Times* seemed to concur. In its issue of March 17, 1987, it concluded, "The chemical has a destructive effect on the bone marrow, the ultimate source of the blood cells of the immune system." One physician experienced in treating AIDS patients, Dr. Joseph Sonnabend, put it very simply: "AZT is incompatible with life."

But Burroughs-Wellcome stands to make billions of dollars over the next few years from sales of AZT. According to the *Globe and Mail*, "demand for shares in Wellcome PLC were keeping Wall Street's international desks hopping. . . . Share prices went from around \$2.45 before the announcement that AZT was useful against AIDS to a high of between \$6.75 and \$8.50 in 1987." The British newspaper *The Guardian* observed: "Without reference to morality or patient welfare, [Burroughs-

Wellcome] is making as much money as it can, as quickly as it can, to cover its costs and then to maximize profits for shareholders."

A lawsuit brought by the National Gay Rights Advocates charges that the FDA and the National Institutes of Health, the two agencies that approve and regulate AIDS drugs, approved AZT in return for "research funding" (a monetary donation) from Burroughs-Wellcome. Apparently, the same day the payment arrived at the FDA, Burroughs-Wellcome was granted exclusive rights to market AZT!

On the basis of the fraudulent and censored FDA tests, the Canadian government is now allowing AZT to be distributed in Canada — for sick and healthy gay men alike. Doctors, prompted by the Burroughs company, are increasingly prescribing AZT for perfectly healthy people. (The rationalization is that AZT "intervenes" to prevent AIDS from occurring.) Two of my friends have been advised to take AZT by their doctors. One of them needed treatment for a bruise on his leg, the other for an eczema rash. Both are otherwise healthy and neither has been tested for HIV antibodies.

This widespread distribution of AZT among gays threatens to irreversibly damage the bone marrow and immune systems of many thousands of men — men who then will require frequent blood transfusions, with all the additional complications and dangers which that will entail. One can only agree with Lauritsen's comment that "it is neither unreasonable nor overly emotional to regard these efforts to put healthy people on a drug regimen that will destroy their bone marrow as attempts at mass murder."

If this were not terrifying enough, the method of AZT administration is downright hair-raising, especially considering the self-destructive tendencies so vividly described by Whitmore and others as lingering in the minds of many gay men.

People, both sick and healthy, who have been persuaded by their doctors to take AZT, carry with them 24 hours a day a smooth, slick, smartly designed plastic box in a tasteful shade of off-white. This box has two small square black buttons marked STOP and START, and two small triangles, one pointing up, the other pointing down. The box is equipped with a beeper that goes off every four hours, night and day, ensuring that the carrier never gets a good night's sleep.

Here is a description of the beeper box's effect, from "Bearing Witness," a *New York Times Magazine* article written by a man who carries one: "The beeper has a loud and insistent tone, like the shrill pips you hear when a truck is backing up on the street. Ask anyone who carries one — these devices insidiously change your life. You're always on the alert, anticipating that chirp, scheming to turn off in time before it can detonate [sic]. It's relentless."

Systematically interrupted sleep is one of the most effective devices of mind control. It "induces in the captive a curious state of unreality in which he is easily influenced and directed by any stable, consistent rules," states one authority, who adds, "Sexual asceticism is almost invariably imposed and as the captive progresses, actual forms of physical punishment, sometimes self-inflicted, may be added."

Two decades ago, at the beginning of gay liberation, who of us, having thrown all the tales of injustice collecting into the trash, would have believed that in just a few years, all over North America, gay men would be waiting for the shrill sound of a little box that would signal them to swallow a few capsules of a slow-acting, deadly poison, voluntarily — without flinching.

I doubt that even dour George Whitmore would have believed that. Yet only four years after 1984, Whitmore carries such a box; for he is the author of the *New York Times Magazine* article, and a photo accompanying the article shows him sitting with a white-coated doctor in front of an enormous machine that apparently is monitoring the level of AZT in his blood.

Having followed Whitmore's story in his own words for more than a decade, and having met him now and again during my New York days in the late '70s, naturally I feel for him. I can only admire his stoicism, his honesty, and the bravery of his witness. But I can't help feeling as well that two aspects of his being are still, more intensely than ever, bound together and struggling within his mind: the clear-seeing survivor, and the suicide. That struggle, I think, is to a greater or lesser extent in all of us who live in this agonizingly anti-gay society.

The terrible facts of AIDS and AZT will certainly play a part in determining the future of us gay people. For now, it is essential that we listen to voices like George Whitmore's, that we consider his story and his struggle, and in every way we can, that we root for the survivor in each of us.