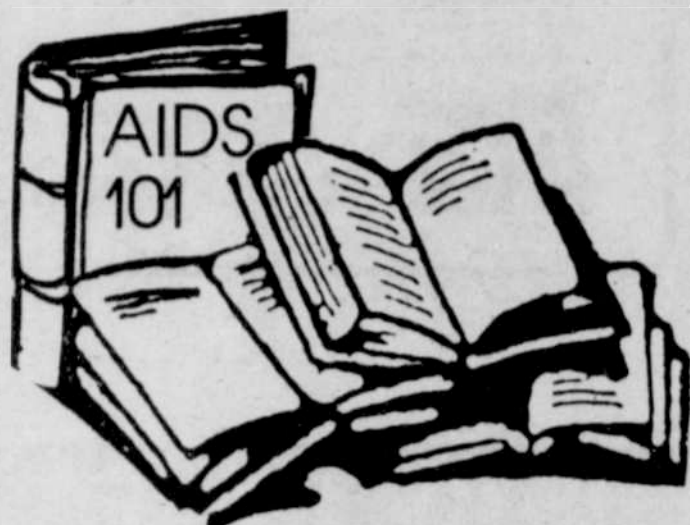


HIV home-test kit not approved

The FDA denied a request from University Hospitals of Bethesda, Md. to license a new kit, called "Aidscheck," to test blood drawn at home for HIV antibodies. Education and counseling would be provided by written material in the test kit and a telephone call. The FDA decided that this kind of counseling was inadequate, and that the test kit could not sufficiently guard against false-positive test results.



BY JEFFREY ZURLINDEN

Toxo research to begin this fall

The first research study sponsored by the Community Programs for Clinical Research on AIDS will compare two drugs to prevent toxoplasmosis encephalitis, a life-threatening infection of the brain. Currently there are no medications proven to prevent this infection, and each year more PWAs develop toxoplasmosis.

"Given the current trends of the AIDS epidemic," says Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan, "we can expect to see a sharp increase in this fatal complication in persons whose immune systems are damaged by HIV infection. We need a safe and effective drug regimen to prevent these cases of toxoplasmosis encephalitis from occurring."

The nation-wide study will begin this fall in 14 cities, including Portland. Locally, the study is sponsored by the Research and Education Group, a consortium of physicians and health clinics who treat people infected with HIV. For more information, please call a nurse investigator at 229-8428.

New light on isoprinosine

The case has reopened on the anti-HIV drug isoprinosine. During 1987-88, the drug was studied by U.S. researchers, but dropped because it was ineffective. Now, according to Swedish scientists, isoprinosine slows the progression to AIDS and lessens the likelihood of developing thrush.

In a European study of nearly 900 people with HIV infection, half took isoprinosine and half took a harmless placebo. After six months, AIDS developed in only two of the people taking isoprinosine and in 17 of the people taking a placebo. However, isoprinosine did not increase the number of T-cells or decrease the amount of HIV in the blood. Very few people had side effects from isoprinosine.

In the older U.S. study, over 500 people participated in a nation-wide study. No one had AIDS and everyone had between 200 and 400 CD4 cells. The results showed that isoprinosine was "safe but useless," says Dr. Robert Murphy, Medical Director of the AIDS Treatment Unit at Chicago's Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Murphy is confident that the earlier studies were well run, and that they thoroughly tested isoprinosine.

However, in light of the new European findings, the U.S. AIDS Clinical Trials Units are considering reviewing the data they collected during the earlier study, rather than repeating the drug trials. "I haven't seen enough evidence to warrant doing another study with isoprinosine alone," says Murphy.

Further tests in Europe will combine isoprinosine with AZT and look for the best dose of isoprinosine.

Reference: C. Pedersen and others. "The efficacy of inosine pranobex in preventing AIDS in patients with HIV infection." The New England Journal of Medicine, June 21, 1990.

CDC recommends routine HIV testing in hospitals

After testing a large number of hospitalized patients for HIV antibodies, the Centers for Disease Control now recommends routine testing upon admission to hospitals in areas where HIV infection is widespread. From January 1988 to June 1989, the CDC anonymously tested nearly 90,000 patients for HIV in 21 U.S. cities. Only patients without signs of AIDS were tested.

Overall, only 1.3 percent of the people tested were infected. However, at the two hospitals in communities with the largest number of people with AIDS, 18 to 22 percent of all men age 25 to 44 years were infected. In the same communities, 1.1 to 3.8 percent of the adolescents age 15 to 19 years were also infected. HIV infection was more common among women in hospitals with a high overall rate of HIV infection.

The CDC recommends that in cities with a high rate of HIV infection all patients, regardless of the reason for their hospitalization, undergo routine testing for HIV. After testing, the CDC recommends counseling and continued health care that may include treatment with AZT and medicine to prevent PCP pneumonia. In cities where HIV is less common, "It may be reasonable to target HIV-1 testing and counseling to more restricted demographic subgroups of patients." The CDC does not list which specific subgroups should be tested.

Some providers of care to people with HIV infection are suspicious of the recommendations. "Because there are not currently enough referral sources for counseling, this could only serve as a way to discriminate against people who are infected with HIV," says Steve Wakefield, executive director of Chicago's Test Positive Aware Network. "The CDC recommendations must be combined with protection against loss of insurance, employment, housing and health care."

Reference: M. Louis and others. "Seroprevalence rates of HIV infection at sentinel hospitals in the U.S." The New England Journal of Medicine, July 26, 1990.

... Between the Lines ...

BY JACK RILEY

Judge Souter's telling opinions

David H. Souter, the man nominated by President Bush to replace Associate Justice William J. Brennan on the US Supreme Court believes gays should be prohibited from adopting children or serving as foster parents.

Thomas B. Stoddard, executive director of Lambda Legal Defense, wrote recently in the New York Times: "In May, 1987 [the New Hampshire Supreme Court] upheld the constitutionality of a bill then before the state legislature prohibiting anyone, without exception, who had ever engaged in a homosexual act from adopting a child or serving as a foster parent. The court accepted on its face the assertion that a gay parent was a bad 'role model' who 'can influence a child's developing sexual identity.'" Souter was one of the four signatories on the opinion.

Stoddard went on to explain, "There is absolutely no basis for such a claim. Indeed, the existing evidence reveals the reverse. The prohibitions on adoptions and foster parenting which are now law in New Hampshire are grounded on nothing more than rank prejudice."

Boycotts will be boycotts....

The ACT-UP boycott against Miller beer and Marlboro cigarettes and the PUSH boycott against Nike sneakers have a great deal in common: neither boycott will amount to a hill of beans, and both are more likely to create a wider chasm between factions, rather than bring about constructive changes.

The success of any boycott depends on how many people actually support the effort. PUSH and ACT-UP are minority groups within minorities. Neither has shown the ability to garner widespread support, despite gaining a little sympathy for black and gay injustices.

Don't get me wrong. The gay community needs ACT-UP as much as the black community needs PUSH. We need these groups to encourage public dialogue and awareness. But as is too often the case, both PUSH and ACT-UP are taking swings that are too hard, and are sometimes in the wrong direction.

Locally, blacks are not scrambling to get on the PUSH bandwagon against Nike, and not too many gays are tossing out their Marlboros or pouring out Miller beer, although a few gay bars have pulled both products for now.

Local blacks realize that Nike has contributed to local minority causes, and local gays are quite aware that the local Miller distributor has been supportive of gay causes in Oregon.

The customer will ultimately decide if Nike, Miller and R.J. Reynolds are to be punished for conceived injustices. But don't count on a majority of blacks to chuck their Nikes, or for a

majority of gays to abandon Miller and Marlboro.

If gays and blacks were to boycott every company that allegedly discriminated against them, then neither group would find anything to eat or wear.

Time to clean up somebody's act

It's refreshing to walk to work through Northwest Portland neighborhoods in the morning. The yards are full of flowers, people say hello; shop owners beginning to open their doors along 21st and 23rd Avenues obviously show pride in their businesses.

So it was with a mixture of shock and outright anger that I rounded a corner on recent morning to confront spray can vandalism at its worst.

"Fuck Helms" was sprayed on the sidewalk in front of one business, and "Boycott Miller" and "Queers Bash Back" adorned several others. On and on the vandalism spread: "Don't Smoke Marlboro."

This vandalism by gay activists does absolutely nothing to hamper Sen. Jesse Helms' re-election campaign. On the contrary, it merely galvanizes hatred against our community.

A representative of ACT-UP said that the group is not responsible for what happened. Nonetheless, if this activist organization wants to do something really constructive this fall, how about volunteering to clean up the mess?

ART/AIDS: needs to be accessible to the non-wealthy

This year's ART/AIDS gala event will be held Nov. 9 at the lavishly renovated Lloyd Center Meier & Frank. It will feature performances by the Portland Opera, Oregon Ballet Theatre and members of the Oregon Symphony.

It is a chi-chi affair, with Oregon's premier pianists on each of the store's floors, amid regional cuisines and vintages. In a 17,000 square-foot tent on the south parking lot, Meier & Frank will present a national performing star.

At \$100 a ticket, this social event will exclude a number of lower income people in our community who would love to participate and contribute to the cause. Is there any way ART/AIDS could make discount tickets available to those who do not have the means to afford the full price? It would certainly be a nice touch.

Regular tickets are available by contacting the ART/AIDS office at 292-0218.

Anything for a dollar drink

It's Monday night, and another ho-hum lineup for Monday Night Football. Well, after 7 pm you can always hit the Silverado for High Heel Madness.

Drinks are a buck apiece for guys wearing heels. Don and Flossie have a boxful of extra heels for those guys who don't have any in their wardrobes. It can make for a fun evening, watching 200-pound bruisers trying to make it to the serving station in heels for the first time.

Only one sour note: the promotion excludes drags. It would seem to me that they could use a few around to show everyone else how it's done.



Renee Augrain, M.ed., N.C.C.

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