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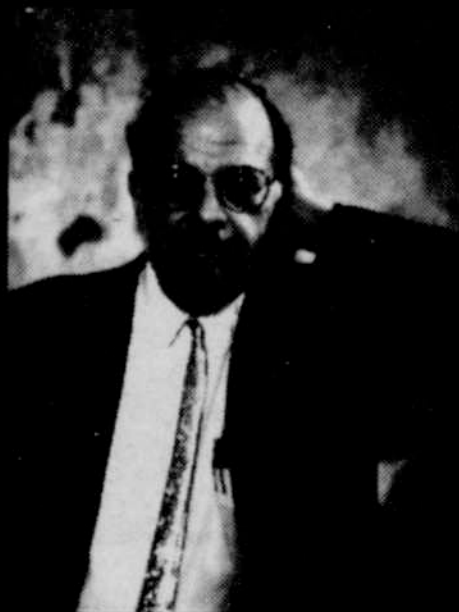
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Blood-heating treatment scrutinized by NIH

Researcher vows to continue procedure

BY JEFFREY ZURLINDEN

The controversial blood-heating treatment called extracorporeal hyperthermia doesn't help people with AIDS, according to a team of scientists from the National Institutes of Health. "From the cases presented, there appears to be no clinical, immunologic, or virologic support for the use of hyperthermia in the treatment of HIV disease or Kaposi's sarcoma. Neither does there appear any support for further human experimentation in this area at this time," concludes a summary of the site visit report.

In a telephone interview, Dr. Kenneth Alonso, who originated the treatment re-sponded, "Their conclusions are absurd, and the report is largely dishonest." He has issued his own detailed critique of the report.

The NIH team inspected the medical records and examined the first two patients who received the treatment at Atlanta Hospital with Alonso and Dr. Logan.

The first patient was a 23-year-old man first diagnosed as HIV antibody positive in October 1989. He also had red, itchy patches on his skin that were diagnosed by Alonso as Kaposi's sarcoma. Before undergoing hyperthermia, the man received a strong antibiotic and alpha interferon; after hyperthermia his condition improved dramatically.

However, when experts from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology re-examined small pieces of skin taken before the hyperthermia treatment, the experts found no evidence of Kaposi's sarcoma. Instead they found signs of an infection probably caused by bacteria spread by cat scratches. The report suggests that the antibiotic did the man more good than did the hyperthermia.

The second patient, a 38-year-old man with proven Kaposi's sarcoma and severe immune suppression, didn't improve after receiving hyperthermia treatment.

"Hyperthermia, as applied in these two cases, appears to have offered no clinical, immunologic, or virologic benefits to these two patients. After hyperthermia, patients #1 and #2 both remained HIV antibody positive and have

mild and severe immune suppression, respectively. Hyperthermia did not change baseline HIV p24 antigen status; patient #1 was and remains negative, and patient #2 was and remains positive," states the report.

Alonso and Logan first reported details of their controversial procedure in San Francisco in June at a conference sponsored by the Foundation for Research of Natural Therapies. Using a heart-lung machine, originally designed to cool and oxygenate the blood during open-heart surgery, Alonso and Logan slowly heated the patient's blood to 108 degrees. The patient was under general anesthesia and monitored carefully for seizures and irregular heart beats. For about five hours, blood constantly circulated between the heart-lung machine and the patient's body. Heating the blood raised the patient's body temperature and reduced the amount of Kaposi's sarcoma, which Alonso describes as heat sensitive.

Alonso has never claimed that the treatment is a miracle "cure" for AIDS, but in June said, "It is a way to control certain types of Kaposi's sarcoma, and may need to be repeated every six months."

The team did not examine the records from the third patient, a 48-year-old New York man who died in Mexico shortly after he repeated the treatment, according to United Press International. Before the treatment, the third PWA was critically ill with tumors in his throat, lungs and heart. The man's father is reported to have paid Alonso \$50,000 to perform the treatment.

Despite the findings of the NIH report, Alonso and the Atlanta Hyperthermia Alliance plan to expand the number of sites conducting hyperthermia research. "We have received approval from several hospitals, including university centers. The research will continue," says Alonso.

The NIH report praised Alonso and Logan for their willingness to cooperate and submit to scientific scrutiny. "Drs. Alonso and Logan and the staff of Atlanta Hospital who assisted with this project have acted with professionalism, openness, and a desire to help their patients with HIV disease."



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