

Information on AIDS update

by Robert Lothian

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is ravaging central African countries and killing many American homosexuals. The disease has even attacked movie stars, and captured media attention, perhaps out of proportion to the problem.

But what is the AIDS situation in Portland?

Brown McDonald, director of the Cascade AIDS Project, said that locally, AIDS is primarily a gay male disease, with another small group of AIDS victims including intravenous drug users and prostitutes.

The national situation is a different story, however, he said. In New Jersey, for example, 70 percent of AIDS patients are Black and heterosexual, and about 55 percent of AIDS patients in New York City are Black, McDonald said.

At least on the national level, he said, "I'd like to emphasize that this is not a gay white male disease."

McDonald said 52 cases of AIDS have shown up in Portland, and 18 local AIDS patients have died from the disease.

The Cascade AIDS Project provides counseling and other support for patients and loved ones, and provides educational materials to the public about the disease. He added that a support group for AIDS patients, the PAL Project, was formed recently.

According to McDonald, the disease is not transmitted casually and therefore is not easy to get. He blames the media for fomenting hysteria about AIDS.

"The press has really taken advantage of this in working people up, and the government has sponsored it by not allowing funds for education," he said. McDonald said a large part of "the AIDS connection" could be eliminated if i.v. drug users used clean needles, which are readily available in Oregon.

The Cascade AIDS Project sponsored an AIDS Update at Good Samaritan Hospital recently, bringing together experts, health care providers and many gay males.

At the one-day symposium, Dr. Donald Abrams, former director of the AIDS/Kaposi Sarcoma Ward at San Francisco General Hospital, recited the theory generally held in the medical community that AIDS originated in Africa.

Abrams said the green monkey, which is common in central Africa, showed in recent tests that up to 40 percent of its population may carry the AIDS virus. The monkeys are common as pets and they roam freely through yards.

AIDS "somehow got into the human population," and was then spread by very sexually active people, eventually entering the United States in the late 70s, according to Abrams. He said that sexually active people came down with AIDS at first because of their higher rate of exposure.



BROWN McDONALD

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

He cautioned that the disease can affect women as well as men. "The disease is clearly transmitted through heterosexual contact."

In Africa, "Nobody wants to be blamed, nobody wants to be a scapegoat." He described a news blackout on the AIDS situation in Africa.

Other experts have questioned the African-origination theory, but evidence seems to indicate that the disease is spreading rapidly in "the AIDS belt" of central Africa.

In the United States, according to Abrams, 60 percent of AIDS patients are white, 25 percent Black and 15 percent Hispanic. The incidence of the disease in the Black population is double the percentage of Blacks in the U.S. population. If gays are screened out of the statistics, he said, over 60 percent of AIDS victims are non-Caucasian. "Interestingly, people in the Asian population have a very low risk." The average age of AIDS patients is 35, he said.

Patients first come down with a set of symptoms called AIDS-related complex, or ARC, which includes swollen glands in the back of the neck. Over 90 percent of ARC patients have not gone on to get AIDS, according to Abrams. Those who come down with AIDS gradually lose their ability to fight infection, and often die from secondary infections like pneumonia or a rare cancer called Kaposi Sarcoma.

Abrams showed slides of AIDS patients wasting away in hospital

beds, their bodies emaciated and their skin blotched with ugly lesions caused by the cancer. Tragically, many patients lose brain function and become literally like children in the later stages of the disease, he said.

Scientists are working feverishly to find a cure, but so far have been unsuccessful. "I wish this was 1995 instead of 1985," he said.

Abrams reported "strange things" happening in the San Francisco area surrounding the disease. He said it is virtually impossible for single men to get insurance, for example. He criticized plans by Colorado and Rajneeshpuram to register AIDS patients.

An ARC patient named Bob reported on his success using high doses of vitamin C. Taking up to 30 grams of the vitamin per day, he said his blood count has returned to normal.

"AIDS does not have to be a death sentence," said Darrell, a former AIDS patient who apparently is now cured. "We must demand that doctors and people in the social services stop making us the victims."

Jim, a diagnosed AIDS patient, spoke of his sense of outrage when a talk show host has the temerity to ask him, "How does it feel to know you are dying of AIDS?" on his birthday. Rather than dwell on "negative affirmations," he said the disease gave him a new appreciation of life. "My choice right now is to live," he said.

Xmas Tree sale

The Good News Daycare Center at 5431 N.E. 20th will be holding a Christmas tree and holiday wreath sale, Dec. 17 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Beautiful six-foot Douglas fir and pine trees will be available for \$10.00. All purchases are tax deductible and all proceeds will go to the operating costs of this fine neighborhood daycare center.

Drug indictments

(continued from page one)

allowed to plea bargain. Ball said there will be a minimum of 30 days jail time for first offenders and penitentiary time for others. "People will either plead guilty or the case will be decided in court."

The undercover investigation took place in a one-block area on N.E. Alberta St. between Grand and 6th avenues and Webster St. This location has been the scene of numerous anti-crime marches and

picketing by neighborhood associations and local business owners.

Chief Lockett said his department will continue to investigate drug dealing around the King Elementary School and other schools under the jurisdiction of the Portland School Police.

The investigation by the school police and the Portland police marks the first time both agencies joined together in a large investigation.

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