

## DECEMBER 1999 CDC Monthly Update

### "Program Focuses on HIV Among the Young"

Washington Post--Health (11/30/99) P. 6; Squires, Sally

The growing number of young people exposed to HIV has resulted in increased efforts to screen people under age 21 for the virus in six high-risk urban areas. According to Dr. Helene Gayle of the National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "about 50 percent [of new HIV cases diagnosed annually in the United States] occur in people less than 25 years of age, and about 25 percent are in people 21 and younger." Many teenagers may not know they are infected because symptoms can take years to develop. Project Access is a testing and counseling program sponsored by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration and the National Institutes of Health that operates in New York, Washington, Baltimore, Miami, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. The project helps educate high-risk teens and tests them using saliva samples, with results ready within a week. Dr. Gayle asserted that good prevention messages, testing, and counseling are needed to help slow the HIV epidemic among young people.

### "World AIDS Day"

Washington Post--Health (11/30/99) P. 17; Donovan, Carrie

While AIDS is no longer among the leading causes of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of new infections among women, minorities, teenagers, and senior citizens continues to increase. The CDC's National HIV and AIDS Hotline can provide information about AIDS and any special programs set for December 1, which is World AIDS Day. The hot line numbers are 1-800-342-2437 (English), 1-800-344-7432 (Spanish), and 1-800-243-7889 (TTY).

### "AIDS's Somber Reminder"

Washington Post (12/01/99) P. B1; Frazier, Lisa

As part of World AIDS Day today, a series of programs will be held in the Washington, D.C. area to educate young African Americans and Hispanics about their risk for HIV. Surgeon General David Satcher has called for AIDS to be fought by

African-American organizations in ways similar to the way they fought for civil rights several decades ago. African Americans accounted for 48 percent of new AIDS cases in 1998, and 60 percent of the new HIV infections among women that were reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were in African Americans. Many young people are failing to protect themselves from the disease. The AIDS Memorial Quilt is traveling to historically African-American colleges to raise students' awareness about the disease. The quilt is a great tool to open discussion and display the reality of the killer disease. In addition, a new "Get Tested" campaign aims to distribute information to schools and youth centers in the D.C. area, including a hotline for HIV testing information.

### "Teen Survey Shows Many Pressured into Sex"

Boston Globe Online (12/01/99); Kim, Ann S.

The New Hampshire Board of Education's Youth Risk Behavior Survey reveals that over 8 percent of high school students in the state feel they have been pressured into having sex. According to the report, 4.1 percent of boys and 12.6 percent of girls reported having been pressured into having sex. Students are becoming sexually active later, the report found, but almost 43 percent had had sex and nearly 11 percent had had at least four different partners. The survey, which asked 87 questions about all kinds of behavior that could injure students, also found that some kinds of violence have not improved since the last survey, with 32 percent reporting they had been in at least one fight in the past 12 months.

"Complacency Warning in Fight Against AIDS"

Reuters (11/30/99); Reaney, Patricia

In connection with World AIDS Day on December 1, experts are warning that complacency about the disease could be keeping HIV infection rates high. The experts note that powerful antiretroviral drugs have extended the lives of some AIDS patients in wealthy nations; however, the drugs have also led some people to believe that HIV is not threat it used to be. New statistics from UNAIDS show that 95 percent of HIV patients reside in poor nations, and infection rates will probably continue to rise due to poor health systems and poverty. In many nations, World AIDS Day efforts will highlight teenagers and the millions of children who have been orphaned by AIDS.

"U.N. Issues Grim Report on the 11 Million Children Orphaned by AIDS"

New York Times (12/02/99) P. A10; Altman, Lawrence K.

A United Nations report issued for World AIDS Day shows that over 11 million children have been orphaned by AIDS since 1981, and that number is expected to reach 13 million by the end of next year. AIDS is believed to be the leading disease causing children to lose a parent. Approximately 95 percent of the orphaned children live in sub-Saharan Africa, UNAIDS and UNICEF said. The report noted that whereas in the past families would take care of orphans, "the traditional African extended family is breaking down under the unprecedented burden of the pandemic." Dr. Peter Piot, head of UNAIDS, added that many of the orphans become child laborers or end up on the streets, becoming targets for gangs, militia, and child armies. In addition, the report said that, compared to children orphaned for other reasons, AIDS orphans are at greater risk for malnutrition and related conditions, illness, abuse, and sexual exploitation.

"Activists Give Clinton Administration an F for HIV Prevention"

CNN Interactive Online (12/01/99)

AIDS activists have issued their report card on the U.S. government's response to AIDS, issuing an F for HIV prevention, an A- for research, and a B for care and treatment. The activists said that prevention programs have failed to protect young people being infected with HIV. They also noted the high cost of AIDS drugs, which many developing nations cannot afford. The ratings were high in the research, care, and treatment fields due to ongoing investment in AIDS research and continued funding in the Ryan White CARE Act. The failing grade

for global AIDS last year was boosted to a C in 1999 after the White House established a global AIDS initiative.

#### "Scrubbing the Blood Supply"

Business Week (11/15/99) No. 3655, P. 120; Licking, Ellen

About 50 Americans are still infected with HIV each year through tainted blood transfusions. The tough screening methods for blood are not perfect, mainly because the antibodies tested for in blood may not show up for weeks or months in the newly infected. To make transfusions safer, researchers are studying three new technologies: nucleic acid testing, blood cleaners for hepatitis C or syphilis, and a blood filter system. Nucleic acid testing can detect small amounts of infectious particles in the bloodstream; however, the filters and nucleic acid tests could raise the price of blood from \$80 to \$120 a pint. Although the risk of contracting HIV or hepatitis C from a blood transfusion is one in hundreds of thousands, the risks add up as more blood is given. Nucleic acid testing has shown great promise in catching hepatitis C in donations. The American Red Cross and American Blood Centers are using such testing in experimental trials, and the technique will likely be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the near future. Meanwhile, Pall Corp. is developing a filtration system that removes white blood cells, which can cause infection in blood recipients. Filtered blood was recommended for use by FDA advisors last year, and the agency is expected to formally approve the process before the year is out.

#### "Can Immune Systems Be Trained to Fight HIV?"

Science (11/19/99) Vol. 286, No. 5444, P. 1470; Balter, Michael

At the Cent Gardes international AIDS meeting outside Paris in October, the focus was on the latest work toward building the body's immune system to control HIV without the help of drugs. Studies of HIV-infected patients showed some signs of resistance when removed from drug therapy for a short time among those whose infection was caught early. Others did not fare nearly as well, but the experiments have given insight into what immune responses are necessary for combating the virus, and how to boost those responses. In fact, short therapy stoppages may even prove to be somewhat helpful to the immune systems among the early detectees, because the resulting increase in HIV in the bloodstream causes a reaction of increase in anti-HIV cytotoxic T lymphocyte (CTL) white blood cells that remain there after therapy starts again. The same occurs in patients whose detection of the virus was in later stages, but the CTLs seem to be ineffective in combating HIV. A possible conclusion is the creation of a stimulus that reproduces the effect of therapy stoppage in the form of a vaccine, but the development of such will not be easy, according to researchers. The only such vaccine in testing at the moment is Remune, marketed by Agouron Pharmaceuticals and Immune Response, based on the research of Jonas Salk. Remune is a whole HIV particle without its infectious abilities, but its effectiveness is not yet conclusive. Remune-backed T-cells fight more strongly against HIV, but they cannot resist it totally. The next step may be to combine the two experiments to find a stronger system than either one is alone.

"Drinking Teenagers Likelier to Try Sex"

Washington Post (12/08/99) P. A9

A new report from the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reveals that teenagers who drink or use drugs are more likely to have sex, at a younger age and with more partners. According to the report, teenagers who are 14 years of age or younger and who drink are two times as likely to have sex than those in the same age group who do not drink; the likelihood is twice as high for 14-year-olds who take drugs. Older teenagers who drink are seven times more likely to have sex than nondrinking teens, and they are two times as likely to have intercourse with at least four partners. The study, based on data from over 34,000 teenagers, found that 63 percent of teenagers who drink alcohol have had sex, versus about 26 percent in teens who do not drink. In addition, 72 percent of teenagers who use drugs reported having sex, compared to 36 percent who do not take drugs.

"Encouraging Use of Coupons to Stimulate Condom Purchase"

American Journal of Public Health (12/99) Vol. 89, No. 12, P. 1866; Dahl, Darren W.; Gorn, Gerald J.; Weinberg, Charles B.

A study conducted in Vancouver, British Columbia, sought to determine whether issuing high-value coupons for condoms influenced condom purchases by young adults. Using coupons for 10 percent and 75 percent off, the researchers found that the discount coupons were successful in encouraging people to buy condoms. While both males and females responded to the coupons, purchases by males increased significantly. The male consumers became more focused on a few brands, while the females tended to investigate other options and spent more time considering a purchase. Also, while both coupon values significantly increased the number of men who browsed the condom displays, only the 75 percent off coupon boosted females' browsing relative to the base level.

"New Warning Issued on Danger of Blood Contact During Sports"

Washington Times (12/07/99) P. A3

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is warning students, teachers, and coaches to be aware of the risk of contracting hepatitis from blood exposure during and after sporting events. The AAP had previously issued a similar warning about HIV, and the group's revised policy statement includes warnings for hepatitis B and C. According to the AAP, anyone who could be exposed to athletes' blood should be vaccinated against hepatitis B, and athletes should be warned not to share such personal products as razors and toothbrushes.

"U.S. Death Rate Reaches Record Low; Births Up"

Reuters (12/06/99)

An annual report from the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health shows that the death rate in the United States hit a record low and life expectancy hit a new high in 1998. The average life span was 76.7 years, a 0.2 percent increase. The report noted the death rate last year was 470.8 deaths per 100,000 people, in large part because of declines in mortality from AIDS,

homicide, and suicide. Infant mortality for 1998 was 7.2 for every 1,000 live births, but that figure still does not compare well with other developed nations' lower rates.

#### "Health Tips: Condoms Appear Best School Option"

United Press International (12/07/99); Manning, Elizabeth

A committee of the American Medical Association has concluded that school programs that promote abstinence for teenagers are "of limited value," while programs that hand out free condoms help to reduce teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. The report also found that safer sex programs show potential in changing students' attitudes and behaviors. The committee also found that school-based condom availability programs do not encourage teens to have sex sooner. More research is still needed to better understand the conditions that encourage greater condom use.

#### "Blood Banks Face Cash Shortage"

San Jose Mercury News (12/07/99); Kwan, Joshua L.

Many blood banks in California are finding themselves unable to keep up financially with the demands for blood and new tests required to ensure a safe blood supply. Blood banks have been forced to spend money on recruiting new donors, and required screening tests are raising expenses. Three San Francisco-area blood banks are operating with losses ranging from \$75,000 to \$4.5 million this year. If new genetic tests for hepatitis C and HIV are added, costs will rise even higher. Some banks have responded to the financial difficulties by reducing the number of employees, scaling down mobile collection, and centralizing storage.

#### "Abstinence Is Focus of U.S. Sex Education"

New York Times (12/15/99) P. A16; Wilgoren, Jodi

Two new surveys conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Alan Guttmacher Institute show that sex education in the nation's schools is now focusing more on abstinence. The majority of schools support the idea that students should delay sex until marriage, but birth control and safe sex are necessary if they do not wait. While over 95 percent of public school principals reported that AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases were discussed in sex education classes, less than 50 percent provide information on where to get birth control or how to use condoms. The Guttmacher poll of superintendents reveals that most school districts have changed their sex education programs over the last 10 years, with approximately one-third raising their emphasis on abstinence. Money from Congress has helped the abstinence message, as Gov. George W. Bush of Texas calls for more federal spending on it. Regional differences show that schools in the South report abstinence-only policies more often, with only 5 percent offering comprehensive sexuality education.

#### "Visions 21: The Spread of HIV"

Time (11/08/99) Vol. 154, No. 19, P. 84; Ho, David

AIDS will remain an epidemic well into the future, according to Dr. David Ho, director of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center. HIV has become the most

fatal microbe in the world, more deadly than tuberculosis and malaria. Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia have been particularly hard hit by the epidemic, and the infection rates continue to rise. Fourteen AIDS drugs have been created and are now used in the United States and Western Europe, but treatments are scarce in less developed areas. Ho predicts that AIDS will be the leading killer of young Africans by 2025, but he notes that Asia "will have the biggest impact on the global spread of AIDS." Depending on how the virus spreads in India and China, 100 million to 1 billion people could be affected, Ho says. The real hope for stopping HIV is a vaccine, which will also require a huge effort on the part of government leaders to help get it to the people who are most in need.

"More Than 10 Million People in India Are Likely to Test Positive for HIV"

Christian Science Monitor (12/16/99) P. 24; Kilborn, Robert; Carden, Lance

Over 10 million people will test positive for HIV in India by the end 2010, according to a new forecast. Krishna Chandra Pant, a senior economic planner, has warned that the Indian government lacks funds to deal with such an outbreak and said that private initiatives for preventative and rehabilitative efforts are needed. About 12 percent of the world's HIV cases are in India, United Nations statistics show.

"AIDS Plagues Uganda"

Washington Times (12/16/99) P. A14; Vick, Vanessa

The AIDS epidemic has hit Uganda hard, and nearly every family in the country has lost a loved one to the disease. Almost half of the world's cases of HIV/AIDS are found in eastern and southern Africa. Because of the high cost of AIDS drugs, many Africans turn to faith healers who use medicinal herbs to help treat them; some estimates hold that 80 percent of Ugandans seek traditional healers for medical care. Healers have the power to cause change in cultural practices, and they might be more successful in changing social practices in the region than would a visiting Western aid worker.

"Nationline: Women and HIV"

USA Today (12/28/99) P. 3A; Bacon, John

New research in the journal Nature reveal that HIV may infect women differently than men. This means a vaccine could be harder to make for women, who were shown in the study to be initially infected with multiple variants of HIV, while the men studied were infected by only one variant.