

## October 1999 CDC Monthly Update

### "Women Put at Risk by Secret Infidelity"

USA Today (10/07/99) P. 1D; Rubin, Rita

Millions of American women wrongly think they are not at risk for contracting a sexually transmitted disease because their partners are supposedly monogamous, according to new research. A report from the Alan Guttmacher Institute in the journal *Family Planning Perspectives* reveals that almost 3.5 million women were wrong about a partner's faithfulness. In addition, many of the women who were aware that their partners were having sex with others did not require them to use condoms. The report, based on data from two surveys, also found that more than 75 percent of sexually active women and men reported having just one sexual partner in the past year.

### "House Holds Hearing on Blood Safety and Supply"

CNN Online (10/06/99)

A congressional hearing was held Wednesday to discuss the safety and availability of the U.S. blood supply. The United States' blood supply may be too low to meet demand next year, according to a recent report from the National Blood Data Resource Center. The General Accounting Office last month said that "while there is cause for concern about shortages of certain blood types in certain regions, the blood supply as a whole is not in crisis." However, if a recommendation from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is adopted--barring blood donations from people who spent six or more months in Britain between 1980 and 1996--it is estimated that blood donations would drop by about 2.2 percent. The FDA's proposal stems from fears of the possible transmissibility of the human version of "mad cow" disease. Testifying before the House Commerce Oversight and Investigations subcommittee, Surgeon General David Satcher noted, "Our nation's blood supply is safer than it's ever been, and it's getting safer as we speak."

### "Treatments Improve, But Hepatitis C Still a Threat"

Boston Globe Online (10/11/99) P. D1; Foreman, Judy

Although there are new treatments for hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection, the disease still poses a threat and is the No. 1 cause for liver transplantation. An estimated 3 million Americans have the virus, and many are unaware of their infection. The virus can go undetected for years, causing severe liver damage. The virus claims 10,000 lives a year, a number that will probably triple within a few years. According to public health officials, testing for HCV is a key step--one made easier recently by the arrival of a \$70 home test kit from Home Access Health in stores. Individuals considered at risk for the disease include injection drug users and anyone who had a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992. A new HCV treatment, Schering-Plough's Rebetron, can generate a sustained response against the virus. However, the bundled product--which combines interferon and ribavirin--is expensive and can cause miserable flu-type symptoms. Some patients argue that using a different interferon than Schering's product may be less toxic; but the bundling prevents scientists from testing their interferons with ribavirin, which was only approved by the Food and Drug Administration as part of the combined Rebetron product.

### "AIDS and the African"

Boston Globe Online (10/10/99) P. A1; Shillinger, Kurt

The AIDS epidemic is killing millions of Africans every year, with more than 22.5 million people in sub-Saharan Africa alone infected. The global epicenter of the epidemic is five southern African countries: Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and South Africa. It is estimated that by 2001, there will be 13 million AIDS orphans in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the United Nations estimates that within five years, 61 of every 1,000 born in the five core nations will not reach one year of age.

### "For Hepatitis C, a Test and a Quiz"

New York Times (10/19/99) P. D8

A new Internet quiz can help individuals determine if they are at risk for having hepatitis C. The American Liver Foundation is providing both the test and free home hepatitis C test kits as part of National Hepatitis Awareness Week. An estimated 300,000 Americans may have been exposed to the virus via contaminated blood transfusions prior to 1992. More information about the quiz and test kits is available at [www.liverfoundation.org](http://www.liverfoundation.org) or at (888) 888-HEPC.

"Increased Demand Sapping Blood Banks"

USA Today (10/19/99) P. 1D; David, Robert

The American Red Cross reports that the nation's blood supply is not increasing enough to keep up with demand. The demand for blood is up 11 percent and is still growing, in part because of rising numbers of liver transplants for those with hepatitis C and transfusions for those with sickle cell anemia. A survey by America's Blood Centers found that 48 percent of Americans have never donated blood and 26 percent of those who did have not donated for over five years.

"Cats Might Be Used to Test Novel Anti-HIV Drugs"

Reuters Health Information Services (10/01/99)

Studying feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) may help researchers fight HIV in humans. Dr. Herman Egberink of Utrecht University in the Netherlands reported in the Journal of Virology that anti-HIV bicyclams can inhibit viral replication of FIV in feline kidney cells. The researchers noted that the study's results reflect how powerful bicyclams are against the virus, which could help determine new ways to prevent HIV progression in people.

"Births to High-School Girls Fall"

Las Vegas Sun Online (10/26/99)

The teenage birth rate for high-school age girls has dropped to a 40-year low, with 30.4 births for every 1,000 15- to 17-year-olds. That rate is down 5 percent from 1998, and the overall rate of births to teens aged 15 to 19 declined 2 percent from 1997. Analysts note that teenagers are using more dependable birth control options and are increasingly using condoms to help prevent HIV infection. The birth rates varied from state to state, and there was a marked drop in births to African American and Hispanic teenagers.

"Cultural Taboos Hinder Hispanic AIDS Fight"

USA Today (10/26/99) P. 9D; Sternberg, Steve

The AIDS rate among Hispanics is increasing steadily, with about 20 percent of new AIDS cases reported last year among Hispanics. Federal health officials note that Hartford, Connecticut, is one of a number of several "hot spots" for Hispanic AIDS cases. Statistics show that Hartford has 120 AIDS cases for every 100,000 Hispanics, compared to 114.7 AIDS cases for every 100,000 Hispanics in New York. At a recent conference that discussed AIDS among Hispanics, one official noted that Hispanic elected officials often have difficulty addressing the issue in their communities because there are strong taboos against homosexuality and supplying clean syringes to drug addicts.

"Bangladesh Faces Blood Risk"

BBC News Online (10/25/99); Chazan, David

Blood donations in Bangladesh are often not screened, a situation that officials fear may result in increased rates of HIV and hepatitis infection. Many of the donors are drug addicts who sell their blood to pay for their habit; a study conducted last year found that 20 percent of injection drug users in the country were professional blood donors. Statistics from one region show that 29 percent of commercial blood donors had hepatitis B, 3.8 percent had hepatitis C, and many also had syphilis.