

1. Mrs Firth
2. Miss Doran
3. Mr O'Connor

8/191/2

(7432)

HEALTH EDUCATION COUNCIL (HEC) LEAFLET ON AIDS

MS(H) will be interested in the draft text of an HEC leaflet (attached) on the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The leaflet was commissioned and funded by the Department and its contents have been cleared with members of the Expert Advisory Group on AIDS.

The leaflet contains the more explicit information on high risk and safer sexual practices which may not be appropriate for Press advertising. It will be promoted as part of the national campaign and will be provided to members of the general public who make a conscious decision to ask for explicit information on AIDS.

Printing of the leaflet will commence in the next few days to ensure bulk supplies are available in the right places to coincide with the launch of the national campaign at the beginning of March.

GRO-C

T W S MURRAY
PMC2
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EXT GRO-C

6 February 1986

cc

Miss Mothersill
Mr Langsden
Miss McKessack
Mr France
Mrs Hewlett Davies
Dr Harris
Dr Smithies
Dr Ower
Dr Sibellas
Dr Raynes
Miss Weller
Mr Harris

Dr Moore

To see e for your papers.

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HEALTH EDUCATION COUNCIL

Draft text: 30th January 1986

February 1986

AIDS - what everybody needs to know

DON'T AID AIDS

AIDS Unit
Department of Health

C O N T E N T S

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Introduction

This booklet is all about AIDS. It tells you about the illness, the size of the problem, who it affects, what you can do to reduce your risk of getting AIDS and where to go for further help and information.

A large number of people who have AIDS are homosexual men. But it's important to remember that AIDS can affect anyone.

Any incurable disease is frightening, especially when it is infectious and when so much about the disease is still unknown. You can find out what is known about AIDS by reading this booklet. The more you know and understand, the more you can do to reduce your risk of ever getting AIDS and to help control the spread of AIDS in this country.

What is AIDS?

AIDS is a condition which develops when the body's defences are not working properly. As a result, people are more likely to get illnesses which the body would normally be able to fight off easily. These illnesses can become serious or fatal. At the moment there is no treatment which can cure AIDS.

X Many AIDS patients develop particular forms of cancer. They may also get serious infections in the lungs, digestive system, central nervous system and in the skin.

Two illnesses commonly found in AIDS patients are:

- * Kaposi's sarcoma - a rare form of cancer mainly of the skin, but also affecting other parts of the body.
- * Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia - a serious infection of the lungs.

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

Acquired means that it's caught from someone or something as opposed to being inherited.

Immune Deficiency - you've got an immune deficiency when your body can't defend itself against certain illnesses.

Syndrome - the particular pattern of illnesses you can get as a result.

What causes AIDS?

AIDS is caused by a virus called HTLV-III, which can get into the blood.

Usually when a virus enters the blood, certain white blood cells produce antibodies which attack and kill the virus. But when the HTLV-III virus gets into the blood, it can actually destroy those white blood cells, leaving the body wide open to attack from other infections.

Anyone who has the HTLV-III virus in their blood could pass the virus on to someone else. They could pass it on either if they have intimate sexual contact with another person, or if their infected blood makes its way into another person's bloodstream. The ways the virus is passed on are described in more detail on page 6.

No-one knows exactly how many people in the UK already have HTLV-III, but experts think that at least 10,000 people may already have been infected.

But just because somebody gets HTLV-III virus, it doesn't automatically follow that he or she will get AIDS. Of the 10,000 people in the UK thought to have been infected with HTLV-III virus, fewer than 300 had developed AIDS by the end of 1985. Where this has happened, it has taken anything between 6 weeks and 5 years, and sometimes longer.

The majority of the 10,000 have remained fit and well. No-one yet knows why the HTLV-III virus affects different people in such different ways.

How many people are affected?

By the end of 1985 it was estimated that about 10,000 people in the UK had been infected with the HTLV-III virus. 275 of these had developed AIDS.

In the UK, nearly 90% of people with AIDS are homosexual or bisexual men. But in central African countries, for example, AIDS affects men and women equally. It is not known why AIDS has followed such a different pattern there.

In the United States there were over 15,000 cases of AIDS by December 1985.

Cases of AIDS in the UK up to December 1985:

- 245 Homosexual or bisexual men
Homosexuals are men who have sexual intercourse with other men. Bisexual men have sexual intercourse with women and men.
- 14 Haemophiliacs and people who were infected by blood transfusion.
(Haemophiliacs are people who need special blood products to help their blood to clot. Since 1985 in this country, all blood has been screened and blood products heat treated to ensure that the virus is not passed on in this way.
- 2 Drug misusers
Those who inject themselves.
- 14 Others
These include men and women who seem to have caught the virus by having sex with an infected partner of the opposite sex, and some early cases of AIDS where complete details about the patients are not known.

Total = 275 By December 1985, 140 of these people had died of AIDS.

What are the symptoms of AIDS?

When you begin to read this list of symptoms, you might start thinking, "Yes, I've got that ... and that ... and that. Oh, no..., I must have AIDS..." But remember:

AIDS is rare.

It's only if you have many of these symptoms together and they last for a long time that AIDS might possibly be the cause.

There can be lots of other reasons for nearly all these symptoms. For example, swollen glands can be a sign of glandular fever. Tiredness, fever and weight loss are much more likely to be signs of worry or going without sleep, or a sign of flu coming on.

The symptoms which may suggest AIDS are:

Swollen glands, especially in the neck and armpits.

Profound fatigue, which lasts for several weeks, with no obvious cause.

Unexpected weight loss - more than 10 pounds (4.5 kg) in two months.

Fever and night sweats, lasting for several weeks.

Diarrhoea which lasts for more than a week, with no obvious cause.

Shortness of breath and a dry cough lasting longer than it would if it were just from a bad cold.

Skin disease - newly formed pink to purple blotches, appearing on the skin, including in the mouth or on the eyelids. They are usually hard, and look a bit like a bruise or a blood blister.

Remember - some of these symptoms are very common, so don't jump to the conclusion that you have AIDS just because you have one of them. Being over-anxious about getting AIDS could even cause some of the symptoms. But, if you are worried, talk it over with your own doctor or a doctor at an STD clinic (for details about STD clinics, see page 12).

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How is the HTLV-III virus passed on?

The HTLV-III virus only survives in body fluids such as blood, semen, saliva and tears. However, no-one has caught AIDS from saliva or tears. All proven cases have been caused by semen or blood.

People can get the virus:

- ☐ through intimate sexual contact, or
- ☐ by getting infected blood into their bloodstream.

Intimate sexual contact

If you have sex with a person who already has the HTLV-III virus, you could get the virus yourself. But some types of intercourse are much more risky than others (see page 7). And of course, the more people you have sex with, the more likely you are to have sex with an infected person.

The virus can be passed on either in sexual intercourse between homosexuals or in intercourse between a man and a woman.

Infected blood

X *abusers* If you inject yourself using an unsterilised needle and syringe which have been used by an infected person, you could catch the virus yourself. Drug users are particularly at risk. And of course once you have the virus you could pass it on to your partner through sexual intercourse.

? *X* In the past, some people were given blood or blood products which had been infected with HTLV-III virus. Haemophiliacs, in particular, caught the virus in this way. Now, in this country, all donated blood is tested before it is used and blood products are heat treated to make sure that the virus cannot be passed on.

Can the HTLV-III virus be passed on in other ways?

Pregnant women who have the virus can pass it on to their baby.

There has been no recorded case of anyone catching the HTLV-III virus from ordinary day-to-day contact with an infected person for example from touching or shaking hands, from saliva or tears, or from toilet seats. Swimming pools are also safe.

The virus itself is not very strong. It does not survive for long in the open and it cannot withstand heat or household bleach.

How can you reduce your risk of getting the virus?

A lot of work is being done to develop a vaccine to fight the virus, but it is unlikely that one will be available in the near future.

Here is some advice to help you reduce your risk of getting the virus.

- * The fewer sexual partners you have, the less risk you have of coming into contact with someone who has the virus.
- * The fewer partners your partner has, the less risk of you getting the virus.
- * The way you have sex also affects the risk. Of course, you will only catch the virus if you have sex with an infected partner. But, if you are unsure of your partner, remember that some ways of having sex are much more risky than others:

Anal intercourse (when the penis enters the rectum, or back passage) is particularly risky. This is because the walls of the rectum are much more delicate than those of the vagina so they are more likely to bleed.

Oral sex is where one partner stimulates the other's genitals with their mouth or tongue. Oral sex carries some risk because there is always a chance that the virus could make its way from the man's semen into the other person's bloodstream.

Any practice that breaks the skin or draws blood, either inside the vagina or anus or on the skin, could increase the risk of getting the virus.

Sharing sex toys, such as vibrators, could be risky as they could carry the infection from one person to another.

Safer sex

Using a condom (a sheath, or rubber), for both anal and vaginal intercourse, may reduce the risk of getting the virus and other sexually transmitted diseases too. If you are using a lubricant with the condom, be sure to use a water-based one rather than an oil-based one.

There is no risk involved in masturbation or in partners caressing each other.

For more detailed information about safer sex, contact The Terrence Higgins Trust or London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard or, for people with haemophilia, The Haemophilia Society (addresses and phone numbers on page 12).

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- * **Avoid sharing any device that punctures the skin, unless it has been properly sterilised.** This includes hypodermic needles, syringes, ear-piercing equipment, tattooing and acupuncture needles.

abusers X
For drug users, the easiest way to avoid the risk of getting the virus is not to inject drugs. But if you do inject, always use your own set of works. Never share with anybody, no matter how well they may seem to you. And don't mix your gear up in a spoon or mixing bowl used by other people. When you have used your needle and syringe, bend back the needle and put it in a tin which can later be thrown away in a dustbin or burnt.

- * There is no need to worry about getting infected by a needle if you are donating blood to the National Blood Transfusion Service, because a new needle is used for each donor. And any needles or syringes which doctors, nurses, dentists or other medical staff use more than once are always completely sterilised each time.
- * To prevent infected blood from entering your bloodstream, it's **best not to share razors or toothbrushes** (because many people's gums bleed when they brush their teeth).
- * Until more is known about AIDS, **women who have the HTLV-III virus should avoid becoming pregnant.** If a woman who has the virus gets pregnant she is more likely to go on to develop AIDS herself. And she may pass the virus on to her baby.

How can you tell if you have the HTLV-III virus?

There is a special blood test called the HTLV-III antibody blood test. It is available to anyone who is worried and thinks they may have the virus.

The test shows whether you have developed antibodies to the virus. Whenever a new virus enters your bloodstream, your blood builds up antibodies to fight off the virus.

If the test shows that you have the antibodies, it means that you have been in contact with the HTLV-III virus. But the test cannot tell whether you will go on to develop AIDS.

If you think you are at risk of getting the virus and you want to have a blood test, think about it carefully. Before having the test, it may help to talk to someone, to work out how you will react if the test shows that you have been in contact with the virus.

You can get advice about having the blood test from:

- any STD clinic (see back page for details)
- The Terrence Higgins Trust Helpline on (01) 832 2971 (see back page for times)
- London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard on (01) 837 7324, or
- your own doctor.
- People with haemophilia, and their partners, can get advice from their Haemophilia Centre Director.

If you want to have the blood test, go to:

- any STD clinic (see back page for details), or
- your own doctor.
- People with haemophilia, and their partners, can arrange the test through their Haemophilia Centre.

The result of the test will be available in 3-8 weeks. If your test result is positive, you will be offered special counselling. You will be asked not to donate any blood, sperm, tissue or body organs.

What if you know someone who has the virus?

There is no known case of anyone catching the virus from ordinary day-to-day contact with someone who has the virus - say a friend or someone at your work. So there's no need to have separate cups, glasses, plates or cutlery.

X 13 If you live with someone who has HTLV-III virus, or if you are in very close contact with someone who has AIDS, you will need extra information. See Further information on page 12.

Take care with any spilt blood. Spilt blood should be cleaned up -if possible by the person it comes from. Put on rubber gloves and wipe up the blood using bleach diluted 1 in 10 with water.

If there is a child with HTLV-III virus at your child's school or playgroup, there is no danger of the virus being passed on during ordinary school activities. Your child's headteacher has received special advice. If you are at all worried, talk to him or her about it.

Do remember how people with the virus must be feeling. They can feel very isolated. You can help them by treating them just as you would normally. Making time to talk and listen to them can be a great help.

Where did AIDS come from?

The first report of AIDS came from the United States. In 1981 a doctor found 5 previously healthy young men with Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia, a very rare type of infection. In the same year came reports of 26 men who had developed Kaposi's sarcoma, a rare form of cancer. All of these men were homosexuals.

Until 1981, both these diseases had only been found in people whose immune system was not working properly. (Normally if a virus enters your body, your natural immune system will produce antibodies in the blood which attack and kill the virus.)

The fact that these two diseases were now appearing in previously healthy young men suggested that something had severely damaged their immune system. This new condition was called AIDS - Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

Doctors very quickly discovered that AIDS is caused by a virus called HTLV-III. But so far they have not found a way to fight the virus, or to vaccinate people against it.

It seems that the virus made its way to Europe from the United States. There have now been cases of AIDS in virtually every European country and in many other countries worldwide.

No-one knows for sure where the HTLV-III virus first came from. One theory suggests that it came from central Africa, but there is no definite proof.

What is being done?

- * Millions of pounds are being spent on medical research in the United States, Belgium, France, the UK and other countries, to try to find a cure for AIDS and ways of preventing it in the future.
- * People with AIDS are receiving special treatment at several hospitals in the UK.
- * There are now specially trained AIDS counsellors who can be contacted through your local Health Authority. They can advise people about the blood test and give counselling to those who are found to have HTLV-III and their families and friends.
- * The Department of Health has produced guidelines for doctors and other health care workers to help control the spread of the HTLV-III virus. Education Authorities, the police force, and other groups are also receiving special advice.

Until more is found out about AIDS, the only way of protecting yourself and others from the HTLV-III virus is by playing safe and by following as much of the advice in this booklet as you can. Until a medical solution is found, AIDS can be controlled by you.

DON'T AID AIDS

Further information

STD Clinics

(Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinics)

- Can give you general advice about AIDS.
- Can give you the HTLV-III virus antibody test.
- Offer special advice and counselling for people who have the virus or AIDS itself, and for their relatives and friends.

STD clinics give free and confidential advice and treatment. You don't need a letter from your own doctor. You can turn up at many clinics without an appointment. However, some clinics prefer you to make an appointment, so phone them first to check on their arrangements.

To find your nearest STD clinic, look in the phone book under Venereal Disease or under Sexually Transmitted Disease. If you have difficulty in finding it, then phone one of these places:

- your nearest main hospital
- London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard (01) 837 7324
- Family Planning Information Service (01) 636 7866

Your own doctor

- Can give you general advice about AIDS and HTLV-III virus.
- Can arrange for you to have the HTLV-III virus antibody test.
- Some doctors give counselling to patients who have the virus.

Terrence Higgins Trust

BM/AIDS

London WC1N 3XX

Telephone Helpline (01) 833 2971

Monday to Friday 7 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday 3 p.m. - 10 p.m.

- Offers help and counselling to people with HTLV-III virus or AIDS itself, and their friends and relatives.
- Gives detailed information on what is safe sex and what is risky sex.
- Gives advice and information to people thinking of having the HTLV-III antibody blood test.

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London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard
(01) 837 7324

- Can answer general queries about AIDS.
- Can put you in touch with local gay support groups.
- Can tell you where your local STD clinic is.

The Haemophilia Society
P.O. Box 9
16 Trinity Street
London SE1 1DE
(01) 407 1010

- Offers advice for people with haemophilia and their partners.

SCODA (Standing Conference on Drug Abuse)
1-4 Hatton Place
London EC1N 8ND
(01) 430 2341

- Has a full list of local services for drug users throughout the country.

College of Health Phonelines
(01) xxx xxxx
(0xx) xxx xxx
(0xx) xxx xxx

For up-to-date recorded information on AIDS.

For further copies of this booklet, please contact your local health education unit (listed in the phone book under the name of your local Health Authority).

Single copies can be ordered from AIDS
P.O. Box xxx
London SE99 6YE

HEC logo and address

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