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HHS NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

FOR RELEASE, FRIDAY A.M. PAPERS
March 4, 1983

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The Public Health Service today recommended interim measures to prevent the transmission of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is a relatively new, often fatal condition that leads to a breakdown of the body's immune system and resultant infections.

"More than 1,100 cases of the syndrome have been reported since June 1981, and more than 400 of these patients have died," said Dr. Edward M. Brandt Jr., assistant secretary for health. "Available information suggests that AIDS is caused by a transmissible agent," he added.

Most cases of AIDS have been reported among homosexual men with multiple sexual partners; abusers of intravenous drugs; and Haitians, especially those who have entered the United States within the past few years. Recently the illness has also been diagnosed in women who have had regular sexual contact with AIDS patients or with men in high risk groups and in babies born to mothers from groups at high risk for AIDS. Blood or blood products appear to be the vehicles responsible for the increased incidence of AIDS among hemophilia patients who require Factor VIII, a coagulating agent produced from pooling the blood of many donors.

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"Our recommendations are prudent and temporary measures that should reduce the risk of acquiring and transmitting AIDS, while the Public Health Service and other groups continue their efforts to find the cause of the disease and, therefore, specific ways to prevent it," Dr. Brandt said.

The Public Health Service recommendations are:

1. Sexual contact should be avoided with persons known or suspected to have AIDS. Members of high risk groups* should be aware that multiple sexual partners increase the probability of developing AIDS.
2. As a temporary measure, members of groups at increased risk for AIDS should refrain from donating plasma and/or blood. This recommendation includes all individuals belonging to such groups, even though many individuals may be at little risk of AIDS. Centers collecting plasma and/or blood should inform potential donors of this recommendation.

*The following groups should be considered at high risk, even though many individuals may be at little risk of developing or transmitting the condition: patients diagnosed with AIDS; sexual partners of AIDS patients; persons with symptoms and signs suggestive of AIDS; sexually active homosexual or bisexual men with multiple partners; Haitian entrants to the U.S.; present or past abusers of intravenous drugs; and sexual partners of individuals at high risk for AIDS.

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The Food and Drug Administration is preparing new recommendations for manufacturers of plasma derivatives for establishments collecting plasma or blood. This is an interim measure to protect recipients of blood and blood products until specific laboratory tests are available.

3. Studies should be conducted to evaluate screening procedures for their effectiveness in identifying and excluding blood and plasma with high probability of transmitting AIDS. These procedures should include specific laboratory tests as well as careful histories and physical examinations.
4. Physicians should adhere strictly to medical indications for transfusions, and autologous blood transfusions are encouraged.
5. Work should continue toward development of safer blood products for use by hemophilia patients.

Dr. Brandt also announced that the Public Health Service is stepping up its efforts on AIDS. In fiscal year 1984, PHS will spend \$11.5 million on the disorder.

This amount represents a continuing increase over the \$3.9 million budgeted for 1982 and \$10.1 million for 1983.

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