

ORIGINAL

FORD

AIDS: WHAT WE ALL NEED TO KNOW

BY

C. EVERETT KOOP, M.D., Sc.D.

SURGEON GENERAL

OF THE

U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



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(GREETINGS TO HOSTS, GUESTS, FRIENDS, ETC.)

I WANT TO THANK THE OFFICERS, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AND THE STAFF OF THE FORD HALL FORUM FOR INVITING ME BACK TO SPEAK WITH YOU -- AND WITH YOUR RADIO AUDIENCE -- ABOUT A VERY IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEALTH MATTER ... WHICH IS ... THE CURRENT EPIDEMIC OF AIDS.

I APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY, ALTHOUGH I'M AWARE THAT THE PUBLIC MAY WELL BE ON THE VERGE OF SUFFERING FROM "MESSAGE OVERLOAD" IN REFERENCE TO AIDS. ELLEN GOODMAN, IN A RECENT NEWSPAPER COLUMN, SUGGESTED THAT THIS WAS NOT SO MUCH AN EPIDEMIC OF AIDS AS IT WAS AN EPIDEMIC OF AIDS EXPERTS.

FOR EXAMPLE, DR. ROBERT GOULD RECENTLY TOLD THE PRESUMABLY HETEROSEXUAL READERS OF COSMOPOLITAN NOT TO WORRY. AND NOW MASTERS, JOHNSON, AND KOLODNY TELL US THAT, YES, WE SHOULD BE WORRIED AFTER ALL.

ELLEN GOODMAN WAS EXASPERATED. I KNOW ELLEN GOODMAN. SHE'S A VERY SENSIBLE PERSON. AND IF SHE'S EXASPERATED ... THEN I GET WORRIED AND I TOO BEGIN TO WONDER IF I'M PART OF THE PROBLEM OR IF I CAN SOMEHOW BE PART OF A SOLUTION.

A SOLUTION ... NOT THE SOLUTION. WE DON'T YET KNOW THE SOLUTION TO THE AIDS EPIDEMIC. BUT MAYBE THERE'S A STEP WE CAN TAKE TOGETHER ON THE PATHWAY LEADING TO THE SOLUTION.

BUT I MUST WARN YOU. IT'S A VERY LONG PATHWAY.

BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF.

FIRST, I'D LIKE TO PRESENT TO YOU WHAT WE KNOW TO BE THE  
FACTS ABOUT AIDS. AND WHAT WE DON'T YET KNOW.

I WANT TO DO THIS IN PLAIN ENGLISH. SO THIS MIGHT BE THE  
TIME FOR PARENTS OF SMALL CHILDREN TO TURN FROM DR. KOOP TO DR.  
SEUSS.

I'LL BEGIN BY REPEATING WHAT I'VE SAID MANY TIMES BEFORE  
... SOMETHING THAT NO ONE WILL DISPUTE:

THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IS POTENTIALLY ONE OF THE WORST  
INFECTIOUS DISEASE EPIDEMICS EVER TO HIT THE HUMAN RACE.

NOTICE THAT I SAID "POTENTIALLY" BECAUSE I AM HOPEFUL THAT  
AMERICANS -- AND, INDEED, PEOPLE EVERYWHERE ON THIS PLANET --  
WILL HAVE THE GOOD SENSE TO LEARN THE FACTS ABOUT AIDS AND THEN  
BEHAVE THEMSELVES IN WAYS THAT PREVENT THE SPREAD OF AIDS.

BUT JUST WHAT ARE THE FACTS? AND WHAT FACTS DO YOU REALLY HAVE TO KNOW IN ORDER TO PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY, YOUR LOVED ONES ... AND YOUR SOCIETY ... FROM THE EPIDEMIC OF AIDS?

YOU OUGHT TO KNOW HOW THIS BUG REALLY WORKS, FOR ONE THING. AT LEAST, AS WE UNDERSTAND IT THUS FAR. REMEMBER, THE AIDS VIRUS IS STILL A MYSTERY. WHILE WE DO KNOW QUITE A BIT ABOUT IT, AIDS COULD STILL SPRING SOME SURPRISES ON US LATER DOWN THE ROAD.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, ONCE THE AIDS VIRUS -- TECHNICALLY, THE HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS, OR H.I.V. -- INVADES THE HUMAN BODY, IT GOES AFTER TWO TARGETS.

ONE TARGET IS THE BRAIN AND THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM.  
HERE, THE AIDS VIRUS ITSELF APPARENTLY BRINGS ON A DETERIORATION  
OF THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM.

HENCE, TO THE ALREADY LONG LIST OF DISEASES AND CONDITIONS  
CAUSED BY AIDS, WE'VE RECENTLY ADDED DEMENTIA.

BUT THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM IS NOT WHERE THE AIDS VIRUS  
HAS BEEN DOING ITS WORST DAMAGE FOR THE PAST 6 YEARS.

THE AIDS VIRUS MOST COMMONLY FEEDS ON -- AND DESTROYS --  
ITS OTHER AND PRINCIPLE TARGET: THOSE WHITE BLOOD CELLS THAT ARE  
THE BASIS OF OUR HUMAN IMMUNE SYSTEM.

ONCE THE VIRUS FINDS THAT TARGET AND ATTACKS, THE PERSON WITH THE VIRUS BECOMES AN EASY MARK FOR THE NEXT INFECTIOUS DISEASE -- OR CANCER -- THAT COMES ALONG.

AND THOSE DISEASES ARE WHAT ATTACK AND KILL AIDS PATIENTS ... DISEASES SUCH AS PNEUMOCYSTIS CARINII PNEUMONIA, KAPOSI'S SARCOMA, CYTOMEGALOVIRAL INFECTIONS, PROGRESSIVE COCCIDIOMYCOSIS OR "VALLEY FEVER," HISTOPLASMOSIS, ATYPICAL TUBERCULOSIS, CANDIDIASIS OF THE ESOPHAGUS AND THE RESPIRATORY TRACT, ULCERATIVE HERPES, AND SO ON. THEY ARE NASTY CONDITIONS, EVERY ONE OF THEM.



SINCE THE AIDS VIRUS FEEDS ON WHITE BLOOD CELLS, THE VIRUS APPEARS WHERE THERE ARE HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF SUCH CELLS. AND WHITE BLOOD CELLS ARE FOUND MAINLY IN TWO BODY FLUIDS -- BLOOD AND SEMEN ... THAT IS, THE BLOOD OF ALL INFECTED MEN AND WOMEN AND THE SEMEN OF ALL INFECTED MEN. THEY ARE ALSO SOMETIMES FOUND IN THE VAGINAL SECRETIONS OF INFECTED WOMEN.

THAT INFORMATION ALSO HELPS US UNDERSTAND HOW THE AIDS VIRUS IS SPREAD FROM PERSON TO PERSON:

THIS DISEASE IS SPREAD ONLY WHEN ANY AIDS-INFECTED BLOOD, SEMEN, AND/OR VAGINAL SECRETION FROM ONE PERSON IS ABSORBED INTO THE BLOODSTREAM OF ANOTHER PERSON.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE TRANSMISSION OF THE AIDS VIRUS DOESN'T HAPPEN IN ANY CASUAL WAY. YOU TRANSMIT -- OR CATCH -- AIDS ONLY IF YOU DO SOMETHING THAT WILL PASS AIDS-INFECTED BLOOD, SEMEN, OR VAGINAL FLUIDS BETWEEN YOU AND SOMEONE ELSE.

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE AIDS VIRUS TAKES PLACE IN FOUR DIFFERENT WAYS.

ONE WAY WAS THROUGH BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS. TODAY, ABOUT 1,900 PEOPLE WITH THE AIDS VIRUS RECEIVED IT BY WAY OF A VIRUS-CONTAMINATED BLOOD TRANSFUSION OR THROUGH CONTAMINATED CLOTTING FACTORS, MADE FROM BLOOD AND USED FOR THE TREATMENT OF HEMOPHILIA. SO, ONE WAY WAS THROUGH BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS.

I SAY "WAS" BECAUSE IN 1985 WE DEVELOPED A VERY GOOD BLOOD TEST THAT DETECTS THE PRESENCE OF ANTIBODIES TO THE AIDS VIRUS IN A SAMPLE OF A PERSON'S BLOOD.

THAT SOUNDS RATHER ROUNDABOUT -- AND IT IS, BECAUSE, REMEMBER, THERE'S STILL MORE ABOUT THE AIDS VIRUS THAT WE DON'T KNOW THEN WHAT WE DO KNOW.

THEREFORE, WE HAVE TO LOOK FOR A CONCENTRATION OF ANTIBODIES TO THE AIDS VIRUS TO TELL US THAT THE VIRUS ITSELF IS PRESENT. IT'S A LOT LIKE KNOWING THERE'S A KILLER NEARBY BECAUSE YOU SEE HIS SHADOW ON THE WALL.

IN ANY CASE, THANKS TO TWO TESTS -- A SCREENING TEST AND A CONFIRMATION TEST -- WE'VE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE OUR COUNTRY'S BLOOD SUPPLY ABOUT AS SAFE AS IT CAN BE MADE. AND THE SAME CAN BE SAID FOR CLOTTING FACTORS AS WELL.

THE ODDS TODAY OF GETTING A CONTAMINATED UNIT OF TRANSFUSED BLOOD ARE BETWEEN 1 IN 40,000 AND 1 IN 250,000.

COMPARE THOSE ODDS WITH, SAY, DEATH ON THE HIGHWAY: THE ODDS FOR THAT ARE 1 IN 5,900.

OR BEING KILLED PLAYING SOCCER: YOUR CHANCES ARE 1 IN 25,000 FOR THAT.

SO, EVEN WITH THE VERY CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE OF 1 CHANCE IN 40,000, THE ODDS OF YOUR GETTING A TRANSFUSION OF AIDS-CONTAMINATED BLOOD ARE EXTREMELY REMOTE.

AND THAT WAS SOMETHING WE COULDN'T SAY JUST A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO.

THAT LEAVES THREE WAYS TO CATCH AIDS. AND THESE ARE MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT FOR SOCIETY TODAY.

THE MOST COMMON OF THESE THREE IS VIA SEXUAL INTERCOURSE. A MAN WITH AIDS CAN PASS THE VIRUS TO HIS SEXUAL PARTNER THROUGH HIS SEMEN.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE PROCESS CAN BE THAT SIMPLE.

AS A RESULT, ONE OF THE GREAT FEARS AMONG RAPE VICTIMS, FOR EXAMPLE, IS THE POSSIBILITY OF HAVING RECEIVED THE VIRUS DURING THE VIOLENCE OF THAT CRIME.

ALSO, A GREAT MANY PROSTITUTES HAVE APPARENTLY CONTRACTED AIDS THROUGH HAVING VAGINAL INTERCOURSE WITH MEN INFECTED WITH THE VIRUS.

BUT -- AGAIN, UNFORTUNATELY -- THE VIRUS CAN BE PASSED THE OTHER WAY, TOO: FROM FEMALE TO MALE. HENCE, AN INFECTED PROSTITUTE CAN PASS THE VIRUS TO HER MALE PARTNER, PARTICULARLY IF HE HAS ANY OPEN GENITAL SORES.

THIS IS A MUCH LESS FREQUENT PATH OF TRANSMISSION. BUT THERE APPARENTLY HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF SUCH CASES. AND I GUESS IT'S ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THOSE INFECTED MEN MAY THEN HAVE PASSED ON THE VIRUS TO THEIR UNSUSPECTING WIVES AND SWEETHEARTS.

AND THIS, BY THE WAY, IS THE HEART OF THE ALARM SOUNDED BY MASTERS, JOHNSON, AND KOLODNY IN THEIR RECENT BOOK. AND I MUST SAY THAT FOR A WHILE I, ALSO, FELT THAT THE EPIDEMIC WAS GOING TO INCREASE GREATLY AMONG HETEROSEXUALS.

BUT WE DON'T YET SEE THE SIGNS OF THAT HAPPENING.  
BIOMEDICALLY IT'S CERTAINLY POSSIBLE, AS I'VE DESCRIBED IT  
ALREADY. BUT BIOBEHAVIORALLY IT DOESN'T SEEM TO A MAJOR  
POSSIBILITY AT THIS TIME.

AND I DON'T KNOW ALL THE REASONS WHY. BUT I TEND TO THINK  
THEY ARE THE SAME REASONS BEHIND THE FACT THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY  
OF HETEROSEXUALS IN OUR SOCIETY -- EVEN AT THE HEIGHT OF THE  
SEXUAL REVOLUTION 20 YEARS AGO -- DID NOT CONTRACT SYPHILIS,  
GONORRHEA, GENITAL HERPES, HEPATITIS A OR B, CHLAMYDIA, OR ANY  
OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE.



THE ONLY CONCLUSION I CAN DRAW IS THAT, EVEN WHEN "LIBERATED" FROM TRADITIONAL SOCIAL TABOOS, THE MAJORITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TEND TO BE CAUTIOUS AND CONSERVATIVE IN THEIR BEHAVIOR, EVEN THOUGH A VERY VISIBLE MINORITY TENDS TO ACT OTHERWISE.

THROUGH IT ALL, THE MAJORITY MAINTAINS ITS PROTECTIVE BEHAVIOR AND SURVIVES. I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW WHY THIS IS SO ... BUT IT IS. ONE DAY I EXPECT DR. LEWIS THOMAS WILL EXPLAIN IT ALL TO US. BUT RIGHT NOW, IT'S STILL SOMETHING OF A MYSTERY ... A MYSTERY THAT, IN ANY EVENT, IS SAVING THE LIVES OF MOST OF US.

AND SO, RATHER THAN SEND EVERYONE A MESSAGE FRAUGHT WITH TERROR, I'VE BEEN SAYING FOR OVER A YEAR NOW, "TO THOSE OF YOU WHO LIVE QUIET AND EVEN PEDESTRIAN LIVES -- BY SOME STANDARDS -- BUT NEVERTHELESS DISEASE-FREE LIVES ... I SAY: 'HURRAY FOR YOU!' DON'T CHANGE. AND LIVE."

BUT ALL IS NOT EVEN THAT SIMPLE IN THIS MATTER OF TRANSMITTING THE AIDS VIRUS THROUGH SEXUAL INTERCOURSE.

CERTAIN SEX PRACTICES NOT ONLY PRODUCE SEMEN, THEY ALSO CAUSE BLEEDING. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE DURING ANAL INTERCOURSE.

FRIENDS, THE RECTUM WAS SIMPLY NOT DESIGNED FOR THAT SORT OF THING. HENCE, WHEN ANAL SEX TAKES PLACE, THE TISSUES TEND TO BE RUPTURED, BLEEDING OCCURS, AND THE VIRUS IN A MAN'S INFECTED SEMEN MAY THEN DIRECTLY ENTER HIS PARTNER'S BLOODSTREAM.

ANAL INTERCOURSE IS MOST OFTEN PRACTICED BY HOMOSEXUALS AND BISEXUAL MALES. KNOWING THIS, WE ARE NO LONGER PUZZLED BY THE FACT THAT THE FIRST 5 CASES OF AIDS REPORTED BACK IN JUNE OF 1981 INVOLVED "OTHERWISE HEALTHY HOMOSEXUALS" IN LOS ANGELES.

INDEED, OVER THE PAST 7 YEARS, 2 OUT OF EVERY 3 PERSONS WITH AIDS HAVE BEEN EITHER HOMOSEXUALS OR BISEXUAL MALES ... OVER 35,000 MEN.

BUT PLEASE REMEMBER THAT HOMOSEXUALITY ... BY ITSELF ... DOES NOT CAUSE AIDS, JUST AS HETEROSEXUALITY ... BY ITSELF ... DOES NOT CAUSE SYPHILIS.

THERE ARE, AFTER ALL, AN ESTIMATED 12 MILLION HOMOSEXUALS IN THE U.S. POPULATION. I WOULD GUESS THAT SOME PRACTICE SEXUAL ABSTINENCE, AS SOME HETEROSEXUALS DO.

BUT -- DAYTIME TELEVISION NOTWITHSTANDING -- IT ALSO APPEARS THAT MOST HOMOSEXUALS -- LIKE MOST AMERICANS GENERALLY -- ARE MONOGAMOUS ... THEY ARE NOT SEXUALLY PROMISCUOUS ... AND THEY DO NOT ENGAGE IN ANY PARTICULARLY TRAUMATIC TYPES OF SEX.

AND SO ... THOSE HOMOSEXUALS DO NOT HAVE AIDS. AND THEY PROBABLY NEVER WILL HAVE IT.

IN FACT, THOSE DISEASE-FREE MEN ARE JUST AS FRIGHTENED OF AIDS AS THE REST OF US ARE.

WHAT IT COMES DOWN TO IS THIS: WE'RE FIGHTING A DEADLY DISEASE ... WE'RE NOT FIGHTING THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE IT ... OR THE PEOPLE WE THINK HAVE IT.

WE'VE NEVER DONE IT BEFORE AND WE'RE NOT GOING TO START NOW ... AIDS OR NO AIDS.

I SAID THERE WERE FOUR WAYS TO GET AIDS:

- \* THE FIRST WAY WAS THROUGH TRANSFUSED BLOOD, WHICH IS NO LONGER A SERIOUS PROBLEM.
  
- \* THE SECOND WAY IS THROUGH SEXUAL INTERCOURSE ... ESPECIALLY -- BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY -- ANAL INTERCOURSE.
  
- \* AND THE THIRD WAY IS TO SHARE NEEDLES AND SYRINGES ALREADY USED BY AN AIDS-INFECTED DRUG ADDICT.

AFTER A PERSON INJECTS A DRUG -- HEROIN OR COCAINE OR WHATEVER -- INTO HIS OR HER VEIN, A TINY DROP OF BLOOD OFTEN REMAINS BEHIND IN THE NEEDLE OR EVEN FURTHER UP, IN THE SYRINGE ITSELF.

IF THAT DRUG ADDICT IS INFECTED WITH AIDS, SOME OF THE VIRUS WILL BE IN THAT DROP OF BLOOD, ALSO. AND FROM WHAT WE CAN GATHER SO FAR, IT APPEARS THAT THE AIDS VIRUS CAN REMAIN ALIVE IN SUCH A SITUATION FOR SEVERAL HOURS AT THE VERY LEAST -- AND POSSIBLY A DAY OR TWO AT THE MOST.

HENCE, THE NEXT PERSON USING THAT NEEDLE AND SYRINGE TO "SHOOT UP" WILL GET THAT DROP OF BLOOD ALONG WITH HIS OR HER "FIX." AND THE AIDS VIRUS WILL GO RIGHT ALONG FOR THE RIDE.  
Q.E.D.

SOME PEOPLE ADVOCATE GIVING ADDICTS CLEAN, FREE NEEDLES IN ORDER TO STOP THE TRANSMISSION OF THE VIRUS. MAYBE SO. BUT FOR SUCH A MAJOR DECISION AFFECTING BOTH THE NATION'S PUBLIC HEALTH AND LAW ENFORCEMENT, YOU NEED MORE TO GO ON THAN A HOPE AND A PRAYER. BUT THAT'S ALL WE HAVE RIGHT NOW, AND IT'S NOT ENOUGH.



IN ANY CASE, I'M TOLD THAT NEEDLE-SHARING IS A VERY COMMON PRACTICE AMONG INTRAVENOUS DRUG ABUSERS BECAUSE IT'S AN EXPRESSION OF THEIR CAMARADERIE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, AND DOESN'T SEEM RELATED AT ALL TO THE COST OR AVAILABILITY OF NEW PARAPHERNALIA.

HOW SERIOUS IS THE AIDS PROBLEM AMONG DRUG ADDICTS? AT THE LAST COUNT, 1 OF EVERY 4 PERSONS WITH AIDS -- 13,000 PEOPLE SO FAR -- CONTRACTED THE DISEASE BECAUSE OF THEIR DRUG AND NEEDLE-SHARING BEHAVIOR. HOWEVER, THIS IS THE POPULATION GROUP THAT SEEMS TO BE SHOWING THE FASTEST GROWTH WITHIN THE OVERALL AIDS CASELOAD.

SO, YES, IT'S SERIOUS.

HOWEVER, THE APPEARANCE OF AIDS WITHIN THE DRUG CULTURE IS YET ANOTHER CATASTROPHE FOR THE DRUG ADDICT -- ALONG WITH DRUG OVER-DOSING, HEPATITIS, T.B., DEMENTIA, STARVATION, SUICIDE, AND SO ON.

IN ADDITION, THE NUMBER OF NON-AIDS DRUG-RELATED DEATHS -- THROUGH DRUG OVERDOSES OR DRUG-INDUCED VIOLENCE -- IS STILL VERY HIGH: ALMOST 6,000, ACCORDING TO THE F.B.I. AND OUR OWN NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DRUG ABUSE.

HENCE, THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM -- AND THE ONE URGENTLY NEEDING A SOLUTION -- IS REALLY DRUG ADDICTION ITSELF AND NOT THE SPECIFIC ACT OF NEEDLE-SHARING AMONG ADDICTS.

THE FOURTH AND FINAL WAY TO GET AIDS IS TO BE BORN OF A MOTHER WHO HAS AIDS.

IN THOSE CASES, THE AIDS VIRUS -- ALREADY IN THE MOTHER'S BLOODSTREAM -- SIMPLY MIGRATES INTO THE CHILD'S BLOODSTREAM SOMETIME DURING PREGNANCY OR DURING CHILDBIRTH ITSELF.

AT LAST COUNT, ABOUT 700 CHILDREN IN THIS COUNTRY HAVE BEEN BORN WITH AIDS. SOME HAVE ALREADY DIED. MOST HAVE BEEN ABANDONED BY ONE OR BOTH PARENTS.

THE PREDICAMENT OF THESE AIDS BABIES IS, TO MY MIND, THE MOST PROFOUNDLY DEPRESSING ASPECT OF THE ENTIRE AIDS EXPERIENCE.

THOSE, THEN, ARE THE FOUR WAYS BY WHICH A PERSON CAN BECOME INFECTED WITH THE AIDS VIRUS.

NOTICE, PLEASE, THAT NONE OF THEM INVOLVES A CASUAL ACT ON ANYONE'S PART. WHICH IS WHY THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE HAS SAID -- AND I SAY -- YOU CANNOT GET AIDS IF YOU SHARE OTHER PEOPLE'S WATER GLASSES, BATH TOWELS, TOILET SEATS, CAFETERIA UTENSILS, SWEATSHIRTS, PENS, PENCILS, WORKSHOP TOOLS, OR COMPUTER KEYBOARDS.

YOU MIGHT CATCH A COLD. OR YOU MIGHT CATCH THE FLU.

BUT YOU WON'T CATCH AIDS.

IN FACT, IF ANY OF THESE REALLY DID PERMIT THE TRANSMISSION OF THE AIDS VIRUS, THE EPIDEMIC OF AIDS WOULD BY NOW HAVE WIPED OUT MANY MILLIONS OF AMERICANS AND TENS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD.

SO FAR I'VE TALKED ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE AIDS VIRUS AND HOW IT IS -- AND IS NOT -- SPREAD. WITH ALL THE EXCEPTIONS AND STIPULATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS ... IS THIS THING REALLY AN EPIDEMIC?

IT DEFINITELY IS, BY ANYONE'S DEFINITION. AND IT'S STILL SPREADING.

FOR EXAMPLE, ACCORDING TO THE WEEKLY SURVEILLANCE REPORT PUBLISHED BY THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, FROM MID-MARCH 1986 TO MID-MARCH OF '87, WE LOGGED IN 14,740 NEW CASES OF AIDS.

BUT OVER THE MOST RECENT 12-MONTH PERIOD -- THAT IS, FROM MID-MARCH '87 TO JUST LAST WEEK IN 1988 -- WE LOGGED IN 23,240 NEW CASES.

SINCE THE FIRST 5 CASES OF AIDS WERE REPORTED OUT OF LOS ANGELES BACK IN JUNE OF 1981, THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE HAS LOGGED IN 56,000 CASES OF AIDS.

FROM 5 CASES TO 56,000 CASES IN LESS THAN 7 YEARS ... YOU MUST TAKE SERIOUSLY ANY DISEASE THAT EXPLODES UPON A NATION WITH SUCH SPEED AND SUCH SEVERITY.

BUT IT'S MORE THAN JUST NUMBERS. THE FIRST REPORTS MAY HAVE COME FROM LOS ANGELES, BUT TODAY EVERY STATE AND TERRITORY HAS BECOME A PART OF THIS EXTRAORDINARILY CALAMITOUS CHAPTER IN HUMAN HISTORY.

INDIANA -- THE HEARTLAND OF AMERICA -- HAS HAD 294 CASES SO FAR ... KANSAS HAS HAD 130 ... NEW HAMPSHIRE, 59 CASES ... NORTH DAKOTA, 6 ... EVEN GUAM HAS HAD 4 CASES SO FAR. IN MASSACHUSETTS, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF AIDS CASES SINCE 1981 NOW STANDS AT 1,200.

AND HERE IN BOSTON, AS OF A WEEK AGO, THE CUMULATIVE AIDS CASELOAD WAS 849.

CLEARLY THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IS GROWING NUMERICALLY AND SPREADING GEOGRAPHICALLY. AND IN ITS WAKE IS PAIN, DEBILITATION ... AND DEATH.

AIDS IS VIRTUALLY 100 PERCENT FATAL. IN FACT, THERE ARE ONLY A HANDFUL OF DISEASES ANYWHERE THAT ARE THIS LETHAL.

OF THOSE 56,000 PERSONS REPORTED AS HAVING HAD AIDS SO FAR, MORE THAN 31,000 HAVE DIED. THAT'S A MORTALITY RATE OF 57 PERCENT OVER A SPAN OF 7 YEARS.

HOWEVER, OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAD AIDS IN 1981, SOME 93 PERCENT HAVE ALREADY DIED.



OF THOSE IN 1982, CLOSE TO 90 PERCENT HAVE DIED.

AND ALMOST A THIRD OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE REPORTED WITH AIDS JUST LAST YEAR HAVE ALREADY DIED.

WE DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THIS DISEASE. BUT ONE THING WE CAN SAY WITH SOME ASSURANCE:

IF YOU HAVE AIDS, YOUR CHANCES OF SURVIVING THE NEXT TWO OR THREE YEARS ARE NOT VERY GOOD. AND YOUR CHANCES OF SURVIVING ANY LONGER THAN THAT ARE ALMOST NIL.

YES, WE DO HAVE A DRUG CALLED A.Z.T., WHICH SEEMS ABLE TO PROLONG THE LIVES OF MANY PERSONS WITH AIDS. AND SEVERAL OTHER DRUGS WITH THE SAME KIND OF PROMISE ARE IN THE F.D.A.'S PIPELINE.

BUT ALL THOSE DRUGS WILL DO -- IF AND WHEN THEY WORK -- IS TO PROLONG A PERSON'S LIFE FOR A FEW MONTHS ... MAYBE A YEAR OR SO. BUT THEY DO NOT CURE AIDS ... OR ANY CONDITION BROUGHT ON BY AIDS.

THE HARD TRUTH IS THAT WE HAVE NO DRUG ... NO VACCINE ... NO "MAGIC BULLET" OF ANY KIND THAT PREVENTS AIDS OR STOPS IT IN ITS TRACKS.

WE'VE ALREADY BEGUN WORK ON A VACCINE AND WE'VE EVEN ALLOWED SOME TESTING ON HUMAN SUBJECTS TO BEGIN IN A VERY LIMITED WAY.

BUT THESE ARE ONLY THE VERY FIRST, PRELIMINARY STEPS IN VACCINE DEVELOPMENT, A VERY LONG AND TEDIOUS PROCESS THAT WILL STRETCH TO THE END OF THIS CENTURY ... AT THE LEAST.

AND, BELIEVE ME, I'M TRYING TO BE OPTIMISTIC.

IF ANYONE WITHIN THE SOUND OF MY VOICE STILL PREFERS TO MINIMIZE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS EPIDEMIC, EXPECTING A CURE TO BE DISCOVERED ANY DAY NOW ... THAT'S A MISTAKE. MY FRIENDS, "ANY DAY" COULD BE 12 TO 15 YEARS AWAY.

WE HAVE NO VACCINE TO PROTECT US. THEREFORE, ANYONE WHO CATCHES THE AIDS VIRUS, GETS NO SECOND CHANCE TO BE MORE CAREFUL THE NEXT TIME AROUND.

DO WE, THEN, HAVE ANY DEFENSE AT ALL AGAINST THE DISEASE OF AIDS. YES, WE HAVE SEVERAL, AS A MATTER OF FACT.

ONE DEFENSE IS SIMPLY TO ABSTAIN FROM SEX AND FROM DRUGS. ABSTINENCE FROM SEX MAY NOT WORK FOR ALL ADULTS -- IN FACT, IF THAT REALLY CAUGHT ON, IT WOULD SPELL THE END OF THE HUMAN RACE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, I THINK ABSTINENCE IS A VERY WISE APPROACH FOR YOUNG PEOPLE STILL IN SCHOOL.

FRANKLY, THERE MAY BE FAR TOO MANY ADOLESCENTS TODAY WHO  
INDULGE IN SEX WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY ... SEX WITHOUT CARING  
... SEX WITHOUT JUSTICE ... AND SEX WITHOUT RESPECT. FOR THOSE  
REASONS ALONE, I, FOR ONE, WHOLEHEARTEDLY RECOMMEND AND ENDORSE  
ABSTINENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

BUT I RECOGNIZE THAT ABSTINENCE MAY NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO  
MOST ADULTS, SO I RECOMMEND MONOGAMY AS THE NEXT BEST DEFENSE ...  
THAT IS, ONE PERSON, ONE MATE:

FIND SOMEONE TO WHOM YOU CAN GIVE YOUR LOVE AND RESPECT AND  
TRUST ... SOMEHOW WHO FAVORS YOU WITH THE SAME ... AND STAY  
WITH THAT PERSON FOREVER.

SUCH A MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIP IS NOT LIKELY TO BE INFECTED BY AIDS ... OR MANY OTHER AFFLICTIONS OF THE BODY OR SOUL, FOR THAT MATTER.

BUT HERE, AGAIN, THE REAL WORLD TELLS US THAT, WHILE MANY PEOPLE ARE MONOGAMOUS -- IT'S NOT FOREVER AND THEY CHANGE PARTNERS ONCE OR TWICE.

AND THERE ARE ALSO MANY MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WHO, FOR WHATEVER REASONS, DO NOT HAVE A LOVING, MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIP -- AND MAY NEVER HAVE ONE -- BUT WHO MAY NEVERTHELESS HAVE THE PERFECTLY NORMAL DESIRE TO EXPRESS THEIR OWN SEXUALITY FROM TIME TO TIME.

I RECOMMEND THAT SUCH PEOPLE PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST THE UNKNOWN. AND, IN THEIR CASE, THE "UNKNOWN" IS THE SEXUAL HISTORY OF EVERY NEW PERSON THEY ENCOUNTER. THE ONLY PROTECTION CURRENTLY AVAILABLE FOR SUCH SITUATIONS IS THE CONDOM.

IN THE ABSENCE OF A SAFE AND EFFECTIVE VACCINE, THE CONDOM IS THE ONLY DEVICE WE HAVE THAT IS LITERALLY A BARRIER AGAINST THE TRANSMISSION OF THE AIDS VIRUS.

WE ALSO KNOW FROM LABORATORY TESTS THAT THE ADDITION OF A SPERMICIDE IN THE TIP OR ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE CONDOM MAY ADD ANOTHER MEASURE OF PROTECTION FROM THE VIRUS.

BUT LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT SOMETHING: THE CONDOM IS NOT ONE-HUNDRED-PERCENT-PERFECT. I'VE NEVER SAID IT WAS. HOWEVER, WHEN THE CONDOM IS USED CORRECTLY -- THAT IS, WHEN IT IS WORN FROM START TO FINISH DURING A SEXUAL ENCOUNTER -- THE CONDOM IS EXTREMELY RELIABLE.

TO SUM UP: AIDS IS SPREADING, THOUGH IT STILL SEEMS TO BE CONFINED AMONG HOMOSEXUALS, BISEXUAL MALES, AND DRUG ABUSERS, WITH AN ADDITIONAL 2,200 OR SO BECOMING INFECTED THROUGH HETEROSEXUAL INTERCOURSE.

AIDS IS VIRTUALLY FATAL, AND WE ARE A LONG WAY FROM HAVING A SAFE AND EFFECTIVE VACCINE TO PREVENT ITS SPREAD ANY FURTHER.



AIDS IS CARRIED PRIMARILY BY BLOOD AND SEMEN. WHATEVER ACTIVITY PROMOTES THE PASSAGE OF THESE FLUIDS FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER IS AN ACTIVITY THAT CAN TRANSMIT AIDS. SEX IS ONE ... INTRAVENOUS DRUG ABUSE IS ANOTHER.

YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO BE TOLD ABOUT AIDS ... BUT THEY NEED TO BE TOLD ABOUT THE WAYS OF DECENCY AND LOVE AND MUTUAL RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY EVEN MORE.

DRUG ADDICTS NEED TO BE TOLD ABOUT AIDS. BUT THE REAL MESSAGE TO THEM IS ... "GET OFF DRUGS ALTOGETHER."

AND NOW, LET ME TRY TO END THIS BLEAK MESSAGE ON A NOTE OF OPTIMISM. I BELIEVE WE WILL OVERCOME THE DISEASE OF AIDS AND WE WILL EMERGE FROM THIS TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE WITH OUR AMERICAN ETHOS INTACT. THE AIDS VIRUS IS DEADLY IN SO MANY WAYS, NOT ONLY ATTACKING OUR BODIES AND OUR MINDS ... BUT ALSO CHALLENGING OUR SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND OUR ETHICAL PRECEPTS.

YET, I DO NOT BELIEVE THE VIRUS WILL WIN. I BELIEVE THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY -- AND, WITH OUR HELP -- THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD WILL WIN THIS BATTLE IN THE END. THAT'S MY PROPHECY.

WHICH REMINDS ME OF SOME LINES WRITTEN BY BERNARD DE VOTO,  
IN A LITTLE ESSAY ON THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. HE WROTE THAT...

"NO ESTIMATE OF WHAT THE UNITED STATES COULD ACHIEVE IN  
POPULATION, POWER, COMFORT, WEALTH, OR LIVING STANDARD HAS  
EVER PROVED ADEQUATE. WHEN TOMORROW CAME, THE EXPECTATION  
PROVED TO HAVE BEEN TOO MODERATE, THE ACHIEVEMENT INVARIABLY  
OUTRAN THE PROPHECY."

WELL, I PREDICT WE WILL FIGHT THIS DISEASE -- AND WE WILL  
WIN. AND I CERTAINLY HOPE THAT SUCH AN ACHIEVEMENT WILL OUTFRAN  
MY PROPHECY AS WELL.

THANK YOU.

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