AIDS And You: The Lethal Relation Essay, Research Paper

AIDS and You: The Lethal Relation

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We know enough about how the infection is transmitted to protect ourselves from

it without resorting to such extremes as mandatory testing, enforced quarantine

or total celibacy. But too few people are heeding the AIDS message. Perhaps many

simply don’t like or want to believe what they hear, preferring to think that

AIDS “can’t happen to them.” Experts repeatedly remind us that infective agents

do not discriminate, but can infect any and everyone. Like other communicable

diseases, AIDS can strike anyone. It is not necessarily confined to a few high-

risk groups. We must all protect ourselves from this infection and teach our

children about it in time to take effective precautions. Given the right

measures, no one need get AIDS.

AIDS is a life and death issue. To have the AIDS disease is at present a

sentence of slow but inevitable death. I’ve already lost one friend from

AIDS. I may soon lose others. My own sexual behavior and that of many of

my friends has been profoundly altered by it. In U.S.A. one man in10 may

already be carrying the AIDS virus. While the figures may currently be less in

much of the rest of the country, this is changing rapidly. There currently is

neither a cure, nor even an effective treatment, and no vaccine either. But

there are things that have been PROVEN immensely effective in slowing the spread

of this hideously lethal disease.

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Defficiency Disease. It is caused by a virus.

The disease originated somewhere in Africa about 20 years ago. There it first

appeared as a mysterious ailment afflicting primarily heterosexuals of both

sexes. It probably was spread especially fast by primarily female prostitutes

there. AIDS has already become a crisis of STAGGERING proportions in parts

of Africa. In Zaire, it is estimated that over twenty percent of the adults

currently carry the virus. That figure is increasing. And what occurred there

will, if no cure is found, most likely occur here among heterosexual folks.

AIDS was first seen as a disease of gay males in the world. This was a result

of the fact that gay males in our culture internationally, in the days before

AIDS had an average of 200 to 400 new sexual contacts per year. This figure was

much higher than common practice among heterosexual (straight) men or women.

For these reasons, the disease spread in the gay male population immensely more

quickly than in other populations. It became to be thought of as a “gay

disease”. Because the disease is spread primarily by exposure of ones blood

to infected blood or semen, drug addicts who shared needles also soon were

identified as an affected group. As the AIDS epidemic began affect

increasingly large fractions of those two populations (gay males and drug

abusers), many of the rest of this society looked on smugly, for both

populations tended to espied by the “mainstream” of society here.

But AIDS is also spread by heterosexual sex. In addition, it is spread by blood

transfusions. New born babies can acquire the disease from infected mothers

during pregnancy. Gradually more and more “mainstream” folks got the disease.

Finally, even the national news media began to join in the task of educating the

public to the notion that AIDS can affect everyone.

The best way to avoid AIDS is to regard it as a highly lethal disease and

practice commonsense prevention. Avoiding infection is IN ONE’S OWN HANDS.

People can protect themselves. To stop its spread, people are encouraged to

obtain and apply accurate AIDS information to their living styles and sexual

habits in order to reduce the risk of getting or transmitting the virus. Sadly,

health promoters claim that “reaching the many who don’t want to know” is no

easy task. Health promoters suggest that educators must learn how and when to

communicate AIDS information-in the right way at “teachable” moments. Many

Public Health Departments are now taking the lead in disseminating education

about AIDS with large-scale public awareness programs

For those who would have sexual activity, the safest approach in this age of

AIDS is monogamous sex. Specifically, both parties in a couple must commit

themselves to not having sex with anyone else. At that time they should take

AIDS antibody tests. If the tests are negative for both, they must practice

safe sex until both members of the couple have been greater than six months

since sexual contact with anyone else. At that time the AIDS blood test is

repeated. If both tests remain negative six months after one’s last sexual

contact with any other party, current feeling is that it is now safe to have

“unprotected” sex. Note that this approach is recommended especially for those

who wish to have children, to prevent the chance of having a child be born

infected with AIDS, getting it from an infected mother. Note also that this

approach can be used by groups of three or more people, but it must be adhered

to VERY strictly.

For those who wish to have sexual contact with folks on a relatively casual

basis, there have been devised rules for “safe sex”. These rules are very

strict, and will be found quite objectionable by most of people who have

previously enjoyed unrestricted sex. But to violate these rules is to risk

unusually horrible death. Once one gets used to them, the rule for “safe sex”

do allow for quite acceptable sexual enjoyment in most cases. A condom must be

used by a man in order to obtain the safe sex.

By conclusion, it is my own strongly held view, and that of the medical and

research community world wide, that the AIDS epidemic is a serious problem, with

the potential to become the worst disease this species has ever known. This

is SERIOUS business. VASTLY greater sums should be spent on searching for

treatments. On the other hand, we feel strongly that this is “merely” a disease,

not an act by a supernatural power. And while it does not seem likely we will

find either a cure or a vaccine in the foreseeable future, it may be that truly

effective treatments that can indefinitely extend the life of AIDS victims may

be found in the next few years. When science and technology do finally fully

conquer AIDS, we can go back to deciding what sort and how much sex to have with

who ever we choose on the basis of our own personal choice. May that time come

soon. In the mean time, we must all do what we can to slow the spread of this

killer.