Print Media

HIV Ireland

National HIV and AIDS Archives

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1st to 10th April 1987
AIDS ward shun Diana

AIDS victims have refused to shake hands with England's Princess Diana when she meets them during a hospital tour.

They say they do not want to be identified in photographs for fear of discrimination when they leave the ward.

They are due to meet her when she visits London's Middlesex Hospital next Thursday to open an AIDS ward.

The men, most of them homosexuals, have not even told friends and relatives — and they fear discrimination when they leave hospital if they are identified.

Doctors were delighted when the princess agreed to visit.

They felt a photograph of her shaking hands with a victim would bring home the message that AIDS cannot be caught by social contact.

"The patients' refusal is a great shame," said hospital manager Chris Ward. "It would have been a tremendous boost."
AIDS vaccines poised for trials

Several potential vaccines against AIDS are beginning to show promise in American laboratories. At least three research teams are poised to begin tests on humans. However, scientists cannot agree on the best regime for testing a vaccine.

Gerald Quinnan, chief of vaccine development at the US's Food and Drug Administration (FDA), said last week that he was certain that trials to test a vaccine on people would begin this year. Allan Goldstein of George Washington University has asked the administration for permission to begin such trials, and has two dozen subjects lined up. Two other research groups have also asked to start tests on humans, said a spokesman for the FDA, but he declined to identify the groups.

Goldstein told a meeting of scientists last week in Bethesda, Maryland, that he had decided to move directly from mice and other non-primates to humans because there was a shortage of chimpanzees on which to test his vaccine. Several scientists at the meeting agreed that this shortage is the worst bottle-neck in research on an AIDS vaccine. Patricia Fultz of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta said that there are about 250 chimpanzees available now for testing an AIDS vaccine in the US.

Last week's meeting at the National Institutes of Health focused on strategies for vaccine trials. Most scientists agree that it will not be easy to prove that a vaccine is safe and effective. Because the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) mutates over time, and even the nature of the disease that it causes differs from place to place, one vaccine might not be effective against all strains. So far, experimental vaccines have varied in their effectiveness against different strains of the virus in laboratory tests.

Most of the vaccines make use of one of the proteins found on the surface, or envelope, of HIV. When introduced into a healthy individual, the protein causes a person's immune system to respond by producing antibodies. The antibodies neutralise the protein and, presumably, would do the same to the whole virus should the person come in contact with it. Other candidate vaccines rely on another virus such as vaccinia or adenovirus, to carry the viral gene that produces the protein—often by inserting this gene into the DNA of the carrier virus. No one has yet prescribed a genetically engineered vaccine—for any disease—for humans, and extra precautions to test the safety of such a vaccine will be needed.

There is still uncertainty over how much danger even a piece of the virus poses to an uninfected person. Goldstein has avoided the problem by creating a synthetic protein that closely matches a protein in the core of HIV, but is not identical to it. When administered to animals, the synthetic protein induces antibodies that neutralise the virus. Unfortunately, scientists believe that genes coding for the core of HIV mutate as frequently as those coding for proteins in the virus's envelope.

One unresolved problem is the question of how safe and effective the vaccine has to be in tests on animals before proceeding to tests on humans. Some primates produce antibodies against HIV vaccines, but these animals are not immunologically identical to humans.
Aids group starts work

The National Task Force set up by the Catholic Church to combat AIDS met for the first time yesterday, and said later that the Government's educational campaign against the disease was "overdue".

The task force includes a member of the Gay Health Action Group. Page 3.
AIDS campaign overdue, says new church task force

By ANNE FLAHERTY

THE NATIONAL Task Force on AIDS set up by the Catholic Hierarchy yesterday criticised the delay in launching the Government's £500,000 educational campaign against the disease, and said the campaign was now "overdue." Members of the 19-strong task force, which met for the first time yesterday in Dublin, chaired by District Justice Gillian Bussey, agreed unanimously that the Government should treat the AIDS problem as "a priority."

The role of the task force is to make recommendations on a practical response required from the Church at all levels to the disease.

Its next full meeting will be in Easter Week. A number of sub-committees to produce proposals on education, care, and research were also set up yesterday to make submissions to the full meetings of the group.

But the delay in a structured response from the State was criticised by two members of the Task Force yesterday.

Ciaran McKinlay, of the Gay Health Action Group, said it was "criminal" of the Government to delay launching its national campaign to publicise the dangers of AIDS while Paul Sheridan, of the Haemophilia Society, described the delay as "ridiculous."

Fr. Paul Lavelle, the pastoral co-ordinator for the task force, and who has been responsible for the drugs awareness problem in the Dublin Archdiocese for three years, said it was "unfortunate" that the campaign had been delayed, but he pointed out that the Health Education Board had been running courses for doctors and other health workers on the issue.

The controversial £500,000 anti-AIDS advertising campaign devised by the Health Education Bureau earlier this year because the Department of Health felt it did not place enough emphasis on the threat to drug abusers. It was then postponed until after the General Election.

The Department of Health said yesterday that the Ministry was developing a programme, and the campaign should come on stream shortly.

Among the task force's roles will be that of making information available on the medical and pastoral aspects of AIDS to priests, community and Church workers and schools. It will also support Church programmes to combat drug abuse, and the formation of counselling services for those affected and their families.

Task force members said they were going to work "on common ground" rather than adopting a confrontational manner, despite the differing views of many of those involved.

Mr. McKinlay of the Gay Health Action Group, said they were not trying to get the Church to "change its mind on condoms" through the task force, but to see what areas the Church could get involved as a caring service.

Members of the group include the director of the Medico-Social Research Board, Dr. Geoffrey Dean; Dr. Fiona McWhinny, of the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Clinic, St. James's Hospital; the Chaplain of Mountjoy Jail, Fr. Michael Cullen; Ms. Johanna Collins, of the Department of Health; journalist Fintan Duddy; Dr. John Concannon of the Drugs Treatment Centre, Jervis Street Hospital, Mr. Peter Nugent, of the National Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, and other medical and clerical representatives.
FELINES

International AIDS day

TODAY is International AIDS day and events worldwide are scheduled to mark the event. In Britain, Bob Geldof, Herbie Hancock, George Michael and Bob George, among others, will be doing their thing at a series of AIDS fundraising concerts as will a number of female acts like Sandip Shaw. That women should involve themselves in such campaigns is particularly appropriate if — as the evidence is beginning to suggest — they are the most at risk when the virus spreads to the heterosexual community.

On the 16th of May Pandora Press and the Terence Higgins Trust will hold a conference at Regent's College, London, designed to give practical advice to women on the implications of the AIDS crisis. People working in health care areas and women's organisations could do well to travel over for the event but if that's out of the question Pandora — also in May — are bringing out a book by psychologist Diane Richardson on the same subject. A lecturer at Sheffield University, she recently travelled to San Francisco as visiting professor to the Centre for Education and Research on Sexuality. The book, "Women and the AIDS Crisis", covers areas like pregnancy, rape, prostitution and living with AIDS. Given recent reports that the virus can be transmitted through breast milk, all this is a new and very frightening aspect of this 20th century plague. Details of the book and the conference can be got from Pandora at 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE.
FRUITS of frowned-on love to fight AIDS

Prices soared to spectacular heights in a bidding frenzy at the auction of the late Duchess of Windsor’s jewels in Geneva last night. The proceeds of the auction, organised by the Pasteur Institute, will go to AIDS research.

The first inscribed piece went for 50 times its estimated value. The piece, with the message “hold tight”, the 15th lot of the evening, finally sold for £2,500,000 after a battle which involved telephone bids from New York against a buyer in Geneva who eventually won. Its basic estimated value was £25,000.

It was one of 25 top lots offered on the opening night of the sale of mementoes that recall the romance between the American, Mrs Wallis Simpson, and King Edward VIII, who abdicated 50 years ago to marry Mrs Simpson, who was twice-divorced. About 1,000 bidders and 300 media personnel crowded the large marquee which housed the auction’s first evening.

For coats were very common and streets were lined with Rolls-Royces, Ferraris and other luxury cars which brought the crowd of potential buyers, including members of the Italian royal family.

In New York, about 600 people gathered in Sotheby’s main salesroom to view slides of the jewels and to have their bids relayed to Geneva. Next to the screen was a “scoreboard”, flashing the current bid in Swiss francs and US dollars. More than 20 phones had been installed at the front of the room. Sotheby staff there took bids from those unable to attend.

The 306-piece Windsor collection ranges from sentimental trinkets etched with intimate inscriptions, to such stunning jewellery as a 31-carat diamond ring. Also offered was a sparkling diamond and ruby necklace, complete with a tassel of rubies, which the King gave to Mrs Simpson on her 40th birthday, a year before they were married. The inscription on the clasp reads: “My Wallis from her David 19 VI 36”.

The former Mrs Wallis Simpson became Duchess when Edward abdicated on December 12th, 1936, to become her third husband. She died on April 24th, 1986, and left her fortune, as well as precious objects, to the Pasteur Institute.

One Sotheby’s official said he was “staggered” by the amounts paid. “On average, items are fetching 10 times the maximum estimates,” he said.

Sotheby’s had put an estimate of $75 million on the entire collection, but admitted that the sale could fetch many times that amount because of the historical and sentimental backgrounds to the jewels.

A Cartier cigarette case made of gray and yellow gold, given to the Duke on Christmas, 1935, by the future Duchess was knocked down for $270,000, no less than 100 times the estimate. There is a map of Europe on the back showing cities which the couple visited in 1934 and 1935. Their route is shown in red and blue enamel, and the inscription inside reads: “David from Wallis, Christmas, 1935”.

An early lot consisting of two cuff-links and four diamond-inlaid buttons by Cartier went for $400,000, against the starting price of $8,000 to $11,000.

The famous “pink flamingo brooch” that the Duchess wore on a trip to the United States in 1941 went for $730,000 dollars, against the expected 120,000.

Record prices were also fetched by the famous panthers created for the Duchess by Jeanne Toussaint, who was responsible for Cartier animal jewels in the 1930s. A brooch with a panther on a 152.32-carat cabochon was knocked down for $930,000 dollars, while the starting price was only $100,000.

Most of the lots were bought by dealers or intermediaries. The sale was reported to have raised a total of $32.5 million.

— (AFP, UPI, PA)
AIDS: A PRIEST’S TESTAMENT

• The Aids epidemic has already killed 15,000 people in New York and the scale of the problem raises awareness to a higher level than in other societies. But, there is also a spiritual dimension to the problem, for both sufferers (and their families) and the priesthood which AIDS: A PRIEST’S TESTAMENT highlights in painful detail through the eyes of Irish-born Father Bernard Lynch in the Aids Ministry in New York and of his flock, mainly in the gay community.

• “Those people have converted me to Jesus Christ”...Fr. Bernard Lynch.

Aids: A Priest’s Testament takes the form of a letter from Father Lynch to a colleague in Africa, interspersed with interviews and location scenes of PWA (persons with aids).

It shows a Catholic priest struggling with his own conscience, experiencing a fundamental challenge to his faith, but who ultimately finds Christ in his ministry: “These people have converted me to Jesus Christ and to a love of the Church which I never had”.

• Life is never simple when the man you love is married to someone else...Felicity Kendal, as the delectable Maxine in “THE MISTRESS”, knows this only too well, but continues to find herself in farcical situations because of her affair with the wedded Luke (Peter McEnery), in the gentle comedy series repeated on BBC 1 at 9.30.
Gays fear backlash over AIDS

By JOHN GIBBONS

DUBLIN'S homosexual community is living in fear of a new wave of AIDS-linked "gay bashing" and reports a "noticeable increase" in violent incidents against gay people in the capital.

"In the last two months a number of gay people have been injured in assaults and stabbings," says Mr. Dave Quinlan of the Gay Health Action group. "Whether this is just homophobia or gay-bashing is hard to tell, but it is certainly a cause for concern."

In Britain and the US there has been a dramatic increase in violent assaults — including murders — of gay people since AIDS first emerged as a major threat. These attacks have been linked to extreme right-wing fundamentalist groups in the US and to the neo-Nazi National Front in Britain.

"People will always look for scapegoats in this type of situation," adds Mr. Quinlan. "In any community there will always be a certain element who will use something like AIDS as a good excuse as any to "justify" ridiculing and assaulting gay people."

How the media portrays the disease, and the gay community as a whole is crucial in setting the mood of public feeling, argues Dave Quinlan. The Gay Health Action group has undertaken its own education programme on AIDS, involving circulating 120,000 leaflets to both gays and the community at large.

"Education, and non-hysterical media reporting, are the two vital ingredients in preventing AIDS hysteria," he adds.

A gay man we spoke with (who chose to remain anonymous) said that he had been the butt of AIDS "jokes." in recent months, and added, "I've been relatively lucky in that I have not been attacked."

"A few weeks back a couple of friends of mine were not so lucky. AIDS is a great excuse for some morons with axes to grind."

Meanwhile, yesterday Mr. Arthur Dunne, chairman of the Institute for school Guidance Counsellors, said that the "nightmarish" threat of AIDS must be dealt with in a positive sex education programme in post-primary schools. Everything possible must be done, he said, to protect people from the threat and it must be done now.
Wall Street Journal
5th April 1987

Of a Shin in Washington Reported to be the Gravest
Mean Streets. AIDS Hews Harbinger on the Horizon

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Health experts warned that screening international travelers for AIDS may only briefly slow the spread of the global epidemic. In a meeting called by the World Health Organization in Geneva, they said there is currently no substitute for safe sexual practices to combat the disease.
AIDS AND THE BISHOPS

Sir. — Mary Holland’s positive comments about the Hierarchy’s task force on AIDS (April 1st) are welcome. However, the context in which they were expressed could leave your readers with the impression that the bishops see their initiative as an alternative to a campaign by the Department of Health, or in competition with it. Such an impression would be misleading for two reasons.

Firstly, the Church is not launching a “campaign”. Secondly, the bishops stated explicitly in their statement of March 11th that the task force “would seek to work in co-operation with other bodies which are responding to the AIDS situation.”

The decision to establish a task force followed a recommendation by the Church’s Pastoral Commission, which in January had been asked by the Hierarchy’s standing committee to recommend, as a matter of urgency, practical measures which should be taken by the Church in its own ministry.

In setting up the task force, the bishops said that the emphasis in its work would be prevention and care and they specified the following needs:

• In the area of education and prevention: 1. to make available information about the medical, psycho-social and pastoral issues to priests, religious, seminarians, community and church workers; 2. to provide support to help prevent discrimination and to ensure just treatment of sufferers; 3. to help schools to provide accurate information within the context of a programme for positive Christian living; 4. to continue and improve Church support for programmes to combat drug abuse.

In the provision of care:

1. Further thought and action about the care of AIDS victims and HIV positive persons and their families in the home, hospita l and hospice settings.

2. To help hospitals and hospices prepare, both by staff education and by the development of appropriate policies, for the increase in the number of victims which now appears to be inevitable.

3. To encourage and guide the response which will be required from particular dioceses, parishes, groups and individuals.

4. To help chaplains in hospitals and prisons with special training in pastoral care programmes.

5. To develop counselling services for groups and individuals through existing Catholic agencies, national and diocesan.

6. To bring home to the whole Catholic community the responsibility to pray for victims and their families.

The bishops said the AIDS crisis posed a particular challenge to Christian community: “The plague of AIDS will bring with it suffering, despair, isolation, fear and rejection. Christ’s care for the sick and the outcast has always been seen as an inspiration for his Church. The AIDS crisis gives that inspiration a new urgency in our day. We trust that the establishment of the new task force will mark the beginning of a response from the Irish Church and from every member of it which will be generous, practical and compassionate.” — Yours, etc.,

JIM CANTWELL,
Director,
Catholic Press and Information Office,
169 Booterstown Avenue,
Co Dublin.

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ICN PHARMACEUTICALS, the US drugs company, looks as though it is on the retreat in the international capital markets after attacking most of the principal currency sectors over the past year or so.

Last week Arab Banking Corporation-Daew, the expected lead-manager of a long-term Deutsche mark bond issue, said it was delaying the deal. This followed a postponement, announced in February, of the company's introduction to the London Stock Exchange.

ABC-Daew said that the issue was being delayed pending further clarification of the company's acquisition plans. It had to consider the interests of bondholders and was not in a position to announce the issue in the near future.

ICN has launched eight convertible Eurobonds into four different markets over the past year, with the aim of building up its capital in Europe. The issue was expected to be followed by a similar issue in the US.

ABC-Daew said that the company had not been surprised by the delay in the issue.

The company's stock price has been volatile, with ICN's shares falling by 20% in the past year. The company has been issuing new shares to raise capital, and its shares are now trading at a discount to the company's book value.

The company has been facing a number of problems, including a decline in its share price and a reduction in its share base. The company has also been facing increased competition from other companies in the pharmaceutical sector.

The company has been trying to diversify its operations, with a focus on developing new products and expanding its international business. However, it has been unable to sustain this growth, and the company's share price has continued to decline.

The company's management has been trying to reassure investors about the company's future prospects. However, many analysts are still concerned about the company's ability to sustain its growth and remain competitive in the face of increased competition.

Despite these challenges, the company is still a major player in the pharmaceutical sector, with a strong international presence and a diverse range of products. However, it will need to address its current problems if it is to continue to be successful in the future.
Kerry McCarthy meets one of the volunteer buddies in Cairde

When people have a long-term illness, they may lose the ability to take care of themselves. In this case, a group of volunteers is available to help. One of them is a woman named Ann, who is a member of the Cairde group. She helps people with daily tasks, such as doing laundry or shopping. Ann is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and she has been with the group for several years. She is a kind and caring person, and she always goes above and beyond to help the people she serves.

The Cairde group has been in operation since 1985, and it has helped many people with long-term illnesses. The volunteers are trained and supervised by professionals, and they work together to provide the best possible care. The group operates in Dublin, and it has helped more than 10,000 people in the past year.

If you or someone you know needs help with daily tasks, you can contact the Cairde group. They can help you with anything you need, from simple tasks to more complex ones. The volunteers are always willing to help, and they will do their best to make your life easier.

In conclusion, the Cairde group is a great resource for people who need help with daily tasks. They are dedicated to providing the best possible care, and they are always willing to help. If you or someone you know needs help, contact the Cairde group today.
Combination of drugs may be more effective

Doctors in the US are studying claims that patients taking the anti-AIDS drug azidothymidine (AZT) respond better if they also receive a drug for the treatment of herpes called acyclovir. Trials are about to begin in several centres to assess the effect of such a combination.

Researchers hope that this new approach will allow them to extend treatment to patients not normally considered to benefit from AZT. For example, one team wants to see if the dual therapy will delay the onset of symptoms in people who have antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) but are not yet ill.

At present, serious side effects limit the numbers of patients who can benefit from AZT. The drug causes suppression of the bone marrow, which results in severe anaemia. Patients taking AZT need monthly blood transfusions to compensate. For all but the most seriously ill, the side effects outweigh the benefits.

The combination of acyclovir and AZT may allow doctors to reduce the dose of AZT. Because the two drugs appear to act synergistically—that is, their combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual effects—the addition of acyclovir means that it may be possible to gain the same therapeutic effect from a lower dose of AZT. A lower dose results in fewer side effects.

Investigations into the combination of AZT and acyclovir are about to start in Seattle and San Francisco. Ann Collier, acting director of the AIDS treatment unit at the University of Washington in Seattle, is planning a study on patients with AIDS-related complex, or ARC, the condition which precedes full-blown AIDS. These patients have relatively mild symptoms such as fever, sweats, aches, fatigue, loss of weight, sickness and diarrhoea.

Collier said: "We are looking towards reducing the dose of AZT so we can treat these less ill patients, but we will also be assessing whether the drugs are safe to give together."

George Rutherford, of the San Francisco Department of Public Health, is planning a more ambitious trial to see whether AZT and acyclovir given together can prevent full-blown AIDS from developing in people who have antibodies to HIV. His group is now looking for volunteers prepared to try the treatment.
Scientists work out their strategies for a vaccine

Two weeks ago, most of the American scientists working on a vaccine against AIDS gathered at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, to take stock of their progress. Their arsenal of hypotheses and experiments for potential vaccines was impressive. It needs to be, for the battle to develop a vaccine will not be easy.

Scientists cannot even agree on a probable timescale. The US Surgeon General, Everett Koop, has said that a vaccine against human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) may not appear during this century. On the other hand, Daniel Zagury, of the Université Pierre et Marie Curie in Paris, has already tried a candidate vaccine on himself. At the meeting at the National Institutes of Health, however, the chief virologist at the US's Food and Drug Administration promised that systematic trials of vaccines will begin on humans this year.

These differences in opinion, several scientists acknowledged, are due to HIV's confounding behaviour. Infected victims create antibodies, but these fail to eliminate the virus. HIV becomes a permanent resident in the very immune system designed to kill outsiders. The virus also mutates with time. Strains from victims in different parts of the world are genetically and biochemically different. The virus even mutates within one person as time passes.

Virologists are currently at the early stage of trying to find a part of the virus that stays consistently the same, that will not itself cause disease, but that will induce an immune response in laboratory animals. The really difficult part, determining whether a similar immune response will protect humans, is still a long way off.

Most vaccines make use of an inactivated version of a virus. Alternatively, a vaccine may consist of viral antigens, the markers on an organism that stimulate the body's immune system to produce antibodies. Should a true virus ever enter the body, the antibodies are primed and ready.

In their search for a vaccine against HIV, virologists have so far focused primarily on the proteins gp120 and gp41 in the virus's envelope. But of the virus's several parts, the proteins in the envelope are the most likely to mutate. So antibodies induced by a vaccine based on the envelope proteins may not recognise a real virus.

Some parts of the proteins in the envelope do not mutate at all, however. Presumably, antibodies against these so-called "conserved" sections would respond to every strain of the virus.

Some virologists are manufacturing gp120 and gp41 using genetic engineering. It is possible to produce large quantities of these proteins by inserting the gene that codes for them into the genetic material of microorganisms such as Escherichia coli. When the bacteria grow, they also produce the required protein. Other researchers are synthesising the regions of the envelope proteins that do not mutate.

To test these antigens, scientists are injecting them into various laboratory animals. Most of the animals successfully produce antibodies. Some of these antibodies slow or stop the replication of HIV in the test tube, or in chimpanzees injected with HIV. However, the antibodies do not recognise all strains of the virus.

Ronald Kennedy, at the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research in Texas, and his colleagues in Britain have injected various animals with antibodies (which recognise HIV) produced in mice. The mouse antibodies are foreign to the animals that receive them, so they act as antigens; the animals manufacture their own antibodies against them. Encouragingly, these antibodies have proved effective against HIV in the test tube.

Bernard Moss, a virologist at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, uses the vaccinia virus to carry and express the HIV antigen. (Infection with vaccinia, which causes cowpox, confers immunity to smallpox.) Moss has engineered vaccinia to carry the gene coding for the envelope of HIV. Theoretically, when such an altered vaccinia virus invades a cell, it will begin producing HIV's envelope protein, which may induce a suitable immune response.
Church and Aids

I AM sure that I was not the only one to be deeply moved and impressed by Father Bernard Lynch, who appeared on the Late Show last week. What a truly extraordinary man he is, full of compassion, wisdom, sensitivity and understanding.

He is deeply upset and angry at the frightful manner in which society and the Church treat gay people. He is horrified by the unchristian rejection of Aids victims.

He told the utterly heart-rending story of the young man of 19 who was dying from Aids. The young man's parents rejected him to the extent that they would not even attend his funeral. The priest was the only friend the young man had as he died in unspeakable agony.

The priest, Fr. Lynch, took the ashes of this unfortunate young man and buried them in his own mother's grave in Sligo. This, of course, is how Christ wants us to behave. This is the spirit of Mother Teresa and Father Donlon.

There is hope for the Catholic Church when it can still produce wonderful priests like Fr. Lynch. Yet I suppose one should not give any credit at all to the Church for the work of compassionate people such as this priest.

The Church's lack of compassion and understanding for homosexual people is utterly scandalous and cruel.

It does absolutely nothing to engender a loving or sensitive approach to gay people. On the contrary, its whole approach is characterised by constant denunciation and condemnation.

It refuses to regard the homosexual as a human being with ordinary human needs, with deep human longings and hopes and aspirations. It isolates the purely genital aspect of homosexuality, which CANNOT be understood and legitimately appreciated when examined outside the context of the affective response of the total human person.

The Church, in fact, dehumanises the homosexual and actually denies his or her dignity.

A. Meave Moynihan
The Princess of Wales talking to nurse Mr Shane Snape (right), during a visit to a special AIDS ward yesterday. Mr Snape has been diagnosed as HIV infected, but has not developed the AIDS symptoms. — (PA wirepicture).

Diana opens AIDS ward

IN A VISIT designed to explode the myth that AIDS can be caught by social contact, the Princess of Wales yesterday shook the hands of nine patients — seven of them confirmed as AIDS sufferers and two recently admitted unconfirmed sufferers — when she officially opened Britain's first purpose-designed AIDS ward at the Middlesex Hospital in London.

Her programme went 15 minutes over schedule as she spent more than an hour at the hospital. The Princess, in a royal blue dress cut on the knee, sat on the edge of patients' beds and appeared interested, concerned and relaxed.

The Princess was shown round Broderip Ward by ward sister Jacqui Elliott, who introduced the other nurses and physicians working there.

Princess Diana — who did not, contrary to earlier rumours, wear gloves when she shook hands with the patients — spent the longest time with Mr Shane Snape (28), a state enrolled nurse from Lancashire who carries the AIDS virus and has been diagnosed as HIV positive.

Mr Snape, who has been working on the ward since it opened in January, became infected through unprotected sex with an infected person.

None of the patients wished to be identified after meeting the Princess.

After unveiling a commemorative plaque Princess Diana was told by Dr. John Dunwoody, chairman of Bloomsbury Health Authority, “Your presence will do a great deal to dispel some of the exaggerated and unjustified anxieties and ignorance surrounding this condition.”

Broderip Ward was originally a general surgical ward but after adaptations costing £250,000 it was reopened on January 19th to provide care for in-patients with HIV infection and AIDS. The ward has 12 beds, four of them in single-bed side rooms, and a sitting room.

As well as the nine inpatients the Princess also met a male outpatient who is recovering from pneumonia. The nine inpatients were all said to be homosexual. — (PA).