Print Media

HIV Ireland

National HIV and AIDS Archives

#NationalHIVArchives

16th to 18th May 1987
AIDS virus

Sir — It is being suggested that the use of condoms to prevent the transmission of the AIDS virus is legitimate and that the use can be condoned by the Church. The intention is not contraceptive, the argument runs, and so the use is not covered by the Church's condemnation of contraception.

But a prior question needs to be faced. Is the use of the condom a direct sterilisation of the act of sexual intercourse? If it is, then the use is morally unacceptable, regardless of the intention inspiring it. I find it impossible to see how wearing a condom can be other than an act of direct sterilisation.

The intention may be to prevent the transmission of the AIDS virus, but the deed sterilises directly the act of intercourse. The sterilisation may not be what is directly desired, but it is so directly caused that it cannot be put outside the intention.

In short, I do not see how the principle of double effect can be applied here, and so the use of the condom does fall under the Church's general prohibition and cannot be condoned.

MICHAEL C.
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A Chart — Regarding the "Late Late Show" on May 15, my sympathy went with the man in the audience who was "a wee bit disappointed" with the practical lesson on the condom. I think he was as sad on his way home as I was.

I recalled Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, whose heart was broken, not by the prospect of her approaching death by guillotine, but by the allotment of her children by the new power in France.

I think some aspects of the media, especially television, constitute a form of persecution, that the older generation has to endure — unintentional, I hope. The accusation of being old and ignorant is only a minor example. Their ideals and traditions are being constantly denigrated and sometimes held up to ridicule. That generation has taken on board more changes in their status, living, socially and economically, than any previous generation, and have done so mostly with dignity.

To tell us we can turn off the knob is facile; we do pay our licences, and we must extend courtesy to other viewers in the family. To tell us that this or that is reality is less than complimentary to the majority of people.

The media, especially television, is our new preacher, and we don't have to travel to hear its doctrine. I know the Director of Programmes had to portray a balanced view as he sees it. But a producer must be sorely tempted to be seen as modern and up-to-date. He has a very onerous task indeed. "It must needs be that scandals come," said Christ, but He added: "Woe to him through whom they come."

MATILDA COONEY
Luggacurren,
Portlaoise.
Sexual promiscuity among politicians was quite widely regarded with indulgence, even with a touch of admiration. But in America now AIDS is casting a dark shadow over such relationships.

"PRESIDENTIAL HOSPITALS UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ON ADULTERY"

So said a headline on the front page of Thursday's New York Times. Gary Hart is political as well as Presidential candidate, and he has a habit of appearing in front of the cameras and raising the ire of the President, who is also a politician as well as a presidential candidate. This is a familiar pattern of interactions between politicians and the President, and it is one that is likely to be repeated in the future.

The mere fact that Gary Hart is a candidate for the Presidency does not make him any less of a politician than he was when he was an ordinary citizen. He has always been involved in politics, and he has always been able to use his position to advantage. He is a man of great intelligence, and he is a man of great charm. He is a man who is not afraid to take a stand, and he is a man who is not afraid to speak his mind. He is a man who is not afraid to be controversial, and he is a man who is not afraid to be a politician.

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Romance is dead in a flash at Trinity Ball

By O'Connell

ADC: the romance of the Trinity Ball last night was fleeting, as improved conditions for "play safe" have reduced the need for condoms available at the Student Union shop to two. Although the young women in their ballgowns were dressed to impress the young men in their tuxedos, the mood was less that of romantic entanglement. And through the air they were being passed open bottles, the contents of which might have had as little effect as alcohol.

And for those who had no notions of being carried away, in the first place, the vital issue was the etiquette of the situation. Does one ignore the logic of a comment upon it? Could that be viewed by one's escort as a leading question?

For those of us old enough to remember romance before AIDS, there was no use in feeling sentimental. The Ball has survived the onslaughts of rock 'n' roll, protest, and penny-pinching. Security was tight, and at the Trinny House Committee was determined that as many as possible of the 5,000 young people who were not having their lives last night will survive the AIDS epidemic. What more appropriate setting could there be for the legendary Ball to show that friendship of the heart and safe sex can go hand-in-hand. Although, in the survey, couples scored higher than in previous years, the message, "play safe," was not ignored. Of those surveyed, 90% said they used condoms, a slight increase from the last year. The drills on the dance floor were met with enthusiasm, with hundreds of people jumping on them and sweating. The mood was as "infectious" as the Trinny AIDS Concern Trust, and the scene was more lively than ever before.

Add, as usual, there were the usual but successful efforts to jump the wall and crash the party. Security was tight, and only those with tickets or "the black market" were allowed in. Exceptions were for the 50 and over and for the charity reception in the Atrium.

Except that this year, the total funds raised for the charity, the "Trinity AIDS Concern Trust," was $5,000.00.
Irish Times
16th May 1987

EEC condemns compulsory AIDS screening

From Rebecca Franceskides, in Brussels

EEC HEALTH Ministers yesterday condemned compulsory mass screening, especially at borders, to identify possible AIDS victims.

There were fears that some countries such as West Germany were ready to introduce obligatory blood tests to prevent the entry of AIDS sufferers.

Earlier in the week the German Interior Minister, Mr. Friedrich Zimmermann, had proposed that Germany should close its borders to AIDS victims. But at yesterday's meeting the German Health Minister, Mrs. Rita Suessmuth, said there were no such plans.

The Minister for Health, Dr. O’Hanlon, said that Ireland now had 19 cases of AIDS and there had been 12 deaths from the virus. He said that the only weapon at Government’s disposal to fight AIDS was public information.

He opposed obligatory mass screening as a way of finding and controlling the spread of the infection or identifying AIDS victims. He said Ireland would be against restricting the entry of AIDS carriers.

He did not want to see notification of the virus made compulsory, as this would breach confidentiality and put people off reporting the illness.

In a joint statement after the meeting Ministers said they opposed "any policy of systematic and compulsory screening, in particular during health checks at frontiers."
AIDS trace is ruled out

EEC health ministers yesterday ruled out suggestions of compulsory follow-up investigations for AIDS patients, writes Bernard Purcell from Brussels.

Ministers met in Brussels to discuss co-ordinating research and public information campaigns for AIDS and cancer.

The consensus at the meeting was that compulsory notification for AIDS patients and their sexual contacts would be undesirable.

"It was decided that if this did happen it might stop people turning up for examination and there is a need for confidentiality in such matters, ministers believed," said Irish Health Minister Rory O'Hanlon.

Ministers also ruled out any suggestion of border controls which would forbid access to suspected carriers.

There has been no pressure on Ireland to emphasise the desirability of condoms, Dr. O'Hanlon said.

Meanwhile, Britain refused to back an planned £16 million EEC anti-cancer campaign until the cost is cut by more than half.
RTE medium AIDS message


By ANNE HARRIS

Borderline. Is for young people and unlikely doesn't have to be part of their marketing profile. They wanted their message home simply; don't carry the can, carry a condom.

As the week went on, so did the expressions of goodness and liberality and, suddenly, a hazard of media saturation appeared: to be caring-keeps good; but, to be that caring can also be tedious.

It was with this treacherous sentiment lurking in the background that the Late Late Show had to begin the job of wrapping up the week.

Gay Byrne was slightly apologetic at the outset: It's known we had heard everything we wanted to know. All he was doing was giving a sort of summation.

And, of course, he did nothing of the sort. He created a brand new programme. It was magnetic, and irresistible. It was less about AIDS and more about sex and the Irish.

There was Dr. Paul Lavalle, deliberately walking the razor's edge of compassion and theology. With his right hand he clutched at the condom, as a preventative for disease. With his left hand, he threw it away as a contraceptive.

Dr. Harry Cawley of the Health Education Bureau, was as resilient, as his AIDS campaign, until he explained that all the material was censored by the Department of Health.

Dr. Derek Friedman, normally an apostle of the prophylactic, was strangely low-key; in the face of religious objections.

Journalist Ann-Marie Hourihan, punctuated the show with three monologues; used in a variety of different ways. She spoke about the realities of sex and young people, the role of the condom and the rude necessity of talking about sex as a nation.

And that was precisely what RTE did, for the country with its AIDS campaign - engaged in an ongoing dialogue with itself about sex. And, in some of it, like Gay Byrne's very explicit commentary on using a condom - was not for the weak-minded, everyone who cares about the necessity for strong measures.

All in all, it was a pro-life week.
Queen of the condoms

TWO MONTHS ago, exotic Irish beauty Paula Reed led a charmed life. Her glamorous wedding to Polish Mayfield was still a warm memory — the week before, she was a dazzling red head at the Cannes Film Festival, dazzling everyone with her beauty and charm.

She had just returned from a trip to Paris, where she had spent a week with her husband, taking in the sights and sounds of the city. The night before, she had attended a private party where she met some of the most influential figures in the fashion industry. It was a moment of triumph, a moment of fame.

FROM the penthouse suite of the hotel, Paula surveyed the city below. She was a woman of the world, and she loved it. She loved the energy, the excitement, the endless possibilities. She was grateful for her beauty, for the opportunities it had brought her. But she also knew that it was a double-edged sword.

Paula had always been a complex woman, a woman of contradictions. On the one hand, she was confident, powerful, and independent. On the other hand, she was vulnerable, sensitive, and insecure.

A safe sex guide

Late Late condoms — no Church ire

THE Late Late Show’s explicit demonstration of the use of condoms was “quite constructive” but would offend the moral sensibilities of many people, said the Catholic Press Office yesterday.

Reacting to the programme, which received immediate complaints from many appalled viewers, the director of the Catholic Press Office, Mr. Jim Cantwell, said it was difficult to know what precise audience was being addressed. “But perhaps one of its effects was to show that the use of condoms in the context of AIDS is not risk free, and we are talking about a killer disease for which there is no known cure.”

RTE defended their decision to show the demonstration which was similar to one shown on British TV recently. Viewers had been warned by Gay Byrne that some might not find the item suitable, but an RTE spokeswoman said the information was intended to show how to use condoms properly if they were to work as a disease barrier.

She said that RTE feels it has nothing to apologise for and was not encouraging the use of condoms but was stating the effects of their use. “It covered all aspects of the topic, including medical and social responsibility and the main thrust of our policy has been to be as factual as possible.” The presentation had been carefully planned, she added.

Mr. Cantwell said the Church’s essential message was a call to moral responsibility. The only certain was of avoiding AIDS was not to abuse drugs or sex, to be faithful to one’s marriage partner and to practice restraint outside marriage.

The capacity of people to respond to a message of this kind should not be underestimated because of the deadly nature of the disease.

The AIDS virus was most prevalent here within the drug culture and this group was very difficult to reach through a mass audience, which obviously needed special approaches to deal with its specific situation, added Mr. Cantwell.

Members of the gay community applauded RTE for its courage in putting out the programme and said that the explicitness was necessary to make people realise the extent of the problem.
IRELAND’s only condom company has lashed out at RTE for boosting its British rival — Durex.

Veronica O’Leary, boss of the Monkstown-based company that packs and distributes R3 condoms, accused the Today Tonight programme of actively endorsing the Durex brand at the expense of her own.

Several times during their AIDS specials last week, Today Tonight showed packs of condoms with the brand-name of Durex clearly visible.

And the same thing happened on the RTÉ programme Borderline, according to Ms O’Leary.

“It’s disgraceful,” she fumed this week. “By law, we’re not allowed to advertise our brand of condoms.

“But yet the national broadcasting network — quite rightly drawing people’s attention to the fact that condoms can help prevent the spread of AIDS — shows the public only the rival British brand.”

Ms. O’Leary said she would have had no objection if RTE had shown the blank side of one of her company’s condoms, with no trade-name displayed.

“But they chose to use Durex, which has the brand-name repeatedly printed all over both sides of the pack.”

However, an RTE spokesperson explained that Durex was only the only brand the production team could lay their hands on at the time of filming.

“It was not our intention to endorse or demonstrate one particular brand at the expense of another,” she said.

Insiders at RTE say strict instructions have since been issued that, in future, no brand name should be visible when condoms are shown on screen — particularly in the context of disease control.

Ms. O’Leary’s company, Frederick Trading of Monkstown, is the only firm to distribute Irish-packed condoms.

Although the condoms R3 and Red Stripe are imported from Germany in loose form, they are packed here in locally-manufactured boxes, providing employment for Irish people, Ms. O’Leary pointed out.

Free one with girlie mag!

IRELAND’s controversial girlie magazine “Esprit” is giving away a free-flavoured condom with every copy of its latest issue which comes out this week.

The Belfast-based magazine which features full-frontal nudes of local girls, has been appointed Irish distributor for Jiffi Condoms, which come in a flip-top, cigarette-type packet on sale from vending machines in pubs, clubs, high-street shops, restaurants and boutiques.

They also come in special flavours — liquorice, strawberry, lemon, mint, orange and banana and are specially aimed at young people although they do carry a message saying that while sex isn’t necessary for a fulfilling and caring relationship it’s best to carry a Jiffi and be safe rather than sorry.
AN IRISHMAN is at the centre of a major row over allegations about the sex life of rock superstar Freddie Mercury.

Paul Frontier has claimed that the Queen lead singer had a string of gay love affairs and that two of his former boyfriends died recently of AIDS.

Frontier, who lives with his partner in Gleneagles, Co. Dublin, was formerly Mercury's personal manager. He made the allegations in a series of articles in a British newspaper on the personal life of the colourful rock star who performed with Queen.

By PAUL WILLIAMS

Frontier's allegations, which appeared in the Sunday World last year, were based on information from sources close to Mercury and claims that he was bisexual.

Mercury is said to have slept with a string of men - all of whom were suspected of being infected with the virus that causes AIDS.

Frontier claims that Mercury kept his gay activities secret from his friends and family.

The row began when Frontier released a book about Mercury's life, which claimed that the singer had slept with numerous men.

But Mercury's estate has denied the allegations and laws have been introduced to protect the singer's reputation.

Frontier also claimed:
- Mercury slept with a string of men - all of whom he suspected of being infected with the virus that causes AIDS.
- He was terrified of sleeping with other men.
- He developed an obsession about his own health, and as a result, refused to sleep with anyone he thought might be infected.
- He later sold his freedom from AIDS to a man who he thought was infected, but who he later found was not.

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How would you react to an AIDS sufferer?

**Fr. Brian D’Arcy**

It is important to know that no one in this country suffers AIDS without being loved by God, no matter what they have done or how the disease has affected them. God loves all who are suffering with AIDS, and we must support and care for them.

I believe that AIDS is a punishment for sin, and that God is punishing those who have sinned. However, God also loves those who are suffering with AIDS, and we must support and care for them.

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Nurses cautioned on risk of Aids

A TOP patient care expert has told nurses that they themselves are going to need counselling and support after treating Aids patients.

Carmel Traiffe, the matron at Cherry Orchard Hospital in Dublin, told nurses that they would see and care for many young people who would die from Aids over the next few years.

'It's going to be very traumatic and nurses are going to need counselling and support to deal with it,' she said in an address to an International Nurses Day Conference.

Ms. Traiffe said nurses would have to take extreme care to avoid needle injuries. If they got such an injury, they should take the recommended steps and report to a supervisor.

She told nurses that in some cases they would not be aware that a patient's blood was antibody positive so it was necessary to follow set procedures with all patients.

She said it was much easier for nurses to become infected with hepatitis B than with the Aids virus. She warned nurses that there was no excuse for leaving used needles or syringes lying around. To do so would be criminally negligent.

Great care had to be taken with all sharp instruments, including theatre instruments and with intravenous drips. When dealing with blood, protection had to be worn. Nurses should also avoid being bitten or scratched by patients.

Ms. Traiffe said it was not necessary to isolate Aids patients.

Linen with minor bloodstains would have to be specially wrapped before being sent to the laundry and washed at high temperatures. Linen with a lot of blood would be sent to the incinerator.

The matron warned that confidentiality to a greater degree than normal would be needed and breaches would be reported to the fitness of practice committee of An Bord Altranais.

Nurses would have to pull out all the stops when it came to caring for Aids patients and there would have to be very close co-operation between nurses and doctors in the management of the disease.

She warned nurses to forget any hang-ups they might have about morals or drugs or homosexuality. Nurses had to create an atmosphere of trust and be supportive of the patient and keep him informed.

Nineteen people in Ireland have developed full-blown Aids and 12 of them are dead.
Synod told 'marriage sex only' may stop AIDS

A REPORT to the General Synod of the Church of Ireland this week says there is a good possibility that AIDS will eventually be contained and possibly eradicated in the long term if sexual intercourse is kept within marriage.

The report recommends that if AIDS is to be avoided by people who are not married, chastity must be practised by those who are married. The report argues

It may be that the full disease will cause many heterosexuals, homosexuals and bisexuals to seriously reconsider the

By JOSEPH POWER and BARRIE POWER

whole question of their sexual liberties and the report says that this is a view which is increasingly being espoused among health professionals.

The Synod of the Church of Ireland has in the past endorsed the report and in a statement on AIDS the Synod said that the Church must take a lead in the fight against AIDS.

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The threat from AIDS

Sir — I have watched with interest and concern the two programmes about AIDS presented by "To-day To-night" on RTE.

We may rightly presume that 90 p.c. of the population of this country of ours believe in "God the Father, the Almighty Creator of Heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, Our Lord".

I am completely surprised and confused when I find a responsible body like RTE refusing to suggest the Law of God Almighty and the Word of His only begotten Son as the only true and effective way of conquering such a menace in our midst.

If a very large number of cars throughout the world were developing a particular fault which mechanics could not correct and the makers of those cars would be inundated with inquiries for their correction. But in considering the remedies for AIDS, not one reference was made to the Maker and Concentrate of the bodies and souls of the human race.

I should imagine that the car manufacturers would investigate the purposes for which the complainers were using the cars, and insist that they would run properly if they acted according to the normal rules set down for them.

Both programmes were conducted and carried through, giving the impression that fornication, promiscuous sex, homosexuality, all sorts of sexual activity outside the marriage and even unnatural modes of behaviour were normal and sinless and that there were no rules laid down by the Creator about these things.

At no time was the truth suggested that all these activities were gravely sinful and that those who indulge in them must not be surprised at the evil effects brought about by indulgence in them.

Let us face the truth — the use of condoms at any time by anybody is a serious sin, and can lead to the eternal death of the soul, which is much worse than the death of the body. Why so much concentration of the sharing of needles, instead of emphasizing the value and salutary effects of Christian self-control and good example?

In the face of this terrible threat to our people I would like to propose to all parents, teachers, priests and bishops to instruct all young and old (and especially our young people) about the polluting effects of chastity and self-control for the love of God.

HARRY LAWLOR, S.J.,
Jesuit Church,
Limerick.
AIDS campaign ‘not explicit enough’

By Padraig Yeates

The Government could have been more explicit in its sexual education on AIDS, and particularly the use of the condom, the Rev Paul Lavelle, pastoral care co-ordinator of the National Task Force on AIDS, told an Ogra Fianasa Fail conference in Dublin yesterday.

He defended the demonstration of their use on RTE’s Late Late Show last Friday and said that the references to condoms should have been on page one of the Government leaflet, not page nine.

He said that the media loved to highlight difficulties that the Church allegedly faced on this issue and its influence on the Government’s education programme. But the Church had had no consultations with the Government beyond saying the latter had a duty to “get out there and care for people”.

The Church had no problem over condoms. “From the Church point of view it’s the moral behaviour of people that has to be looked at. If people are sexually active outside of marriage that is immoral behaviour and the Church says so.

“If people decide they are going to have sex outside marriage regardless, it would seem irresponsible not to take the necessary precautions. Indeed, unprotected sex by someone with AIDS is verging on manslaughter.”

He also called for a crash programme by health agencies to reach intravenous drug users on a one-to-one basis because the national publicity campaign would not influence their behaviour to any great degree. A needle exchange programme should be looked at seriously in this context.

Father Lavelle contrasted the attitude to AIDS and drug abuse with that towards drink. “Nobody says boo when they see Frank Stapleton on a poster holding a pint and wearing an Irish jersey. And if you did say boo, you wouldn’t get any media coverage for it because of the vested interests involved.”

Yet issues of AIDS and drug education were about changing lifestyles and basic attitudes in Irish life, he said.
Irish Times
18th May 1987

Unit unable to do AIDS tests on abused children

By Padraig Yeates

LACK of funds prevented AIDS screening tests being performed on children who were victims of sexual assaults. Dr Maura Woods, head of the Sexual Assault Unit at the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin, told a conference of Ogra Fianna Fail yesterday.

"We do tests for sexually transmitted diseases on all victims of assault, but don't test everyone for AIDS because the money isn't there," she said. "A lot of children who come to us are sexually abused." This was a high risk group.

At least 60 new children a month were being treated at the unit. So far this year, over 220 of 285 patients had been children. Since September 1985, nine months after the unit was established, the majority of referrals had been children.

A recent survey had shown that at least two children in every school class in Ireland had been sexually abused and the minimum period of abuse was five to six years. In any one year, at least 5,000 children were being sexually abused in the Dublin area.

Because of health cuts, the unit is due to close by June 1st. Dr Woods said she had begun phasing out clients since last Friday. Until then she had "still been hoping some guardian angel would swoop down and save us."

Dr Dermot Fitzpatrick, a Fianna Fail TD for Dublin Central and a member of the Eastern Health Board, told the conference that Dr Woods' unit had exposed abuses in an area of Irish life ignored for far too long. "I think the abuse of women and children is something we are going to have to face up to as a society, sooner rather than later."

He said after the formal end of the conference that "with goodwill on all sides the future of the unit can be sorted out in an afternoon over a table. At present it's caught up in medical politics."

Dr Fitzpatrick said that the Minister for Health, Dr O'Halpin, was particularly concerned about the future of the unit, and the future strategy for dealing with sexual assault would be given priority.

Dr Woods said that it would be a few months at least before the Rotunda's facilities could be replaced. As it was, resources were inadequate, with children having to wait for up to eight weeks for referral from the Sexual Assault Unit once their cases had been validated.

Initially, Temple Street Children's Hospital in Dublin had agreed to take all referrals but because of cutbacks it had had to reduce progressively its catchment area. Likewise, the Rotunda was reducing all its services.
Spread of AIDS Within the U.S. May Be Slowing

Studies on Military Recruits, San Francisco Population Suggest Fewer New Cases

By MARILYNN CHASE
Staff Reporter of The Wall Street Journal

SAN FRANCISCO—The spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome may be leveling off in some segments of the U.S. population—among them, military recruits and San Francisco homosexuals.

San Francisco’s public health department says the increase in new infections from the AIDS virus among the city’s homosexual men has slowed to a rate of about 1% a year from about 12% to 14% annually during the peak years of its spread from 1980 through 1982. The figures were obtained from stored blood samples taken for a 10-year study of San Francisco gay men in a hepatitis-B survey.

The San Francisco study roughly parallels a report last week from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, which tentatively suggested that the infection level among military recruits may be stabilizing at about 1.5 per 1,000. The study, carried in the CDC publication Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, looked at applicants for military service during the 15 months from October 1985 through December 1986.

Greater Public Awareness

The two pieces of welcome news may indicate the success of some public education programs, although in the case of the military, it may merely mean the avoidance of induction centers by those who fear they are infected.

And it doesn’t mean a waning of the epidemic anytime soon, because the volume of AIDS cases for the next few years is already programmed—“locked in” by the number of people who are already infected with the deadly virus but haven’t yet shown symptoms. Because of the long incubation period, those infected with the virus often don’t become ill for several years.

As of last Monday, the center reported 35,518 cases of AIDS, which is spread by blood, shared needles and sexual contact. About 1.4 million Americans are believed to carry the virus. San Francisco studies indicate that 80% of those infected with the virus have progressed to AIDS or AIDS-related complex after seven years. AIDS-related complex, or ARC, is an earlier phase of the disease.

Data Viewed Cautiously

George Lemp, chief of AIDS surveillance for the San Francisco Public Health Department, said the U.S. public should welcome the new data cautiously, and without abandoning current education programs.

“Massive education and public awareness should level off the rate of new infection,” Mr. Lemp said. “It’s been shown in San Francisco gay men that the new-infection rate has plummeted since they began practicing safe sex. Education and community involvement is very effective in changing behavior, for example in reducing numbers of partners and in using condoms.”

However, he noted, “we expect the number of cases of disease to continue to increase because there are a large number of people infected in prior years who will continue to progress to AIDS.” Because of the long incubation period of the virus, he explained, the majority of infected people were exposed “before the disease was ever
U.S. health officials say the spread of infection by the AIDS virus may be leveling off in some segments of the U.S. population, including San Francisco homosexuals and U.S. military recruits. But the evidence doesn't mean a waning of the epidemic anytime soon. (Story on Page 8.)