

Print Media



HIV
Ireland

National HIV and AIDS

Archives

#NationalHIVArchives



26th to 31st July 1987

The Sunday Press, July 26, 1987

A FEW WEEKS AGO we told the story of the short, unhappy life of Karen, drug addict, single mother, AIDS carrier. Marjorie could be Karen — except she's still alive. Sexually abused by her father, she left home, went on drugs and into prostitution. Now doctors don protective clothing before they'll touch her but she's still on the game.



Picture by Bob Hobby

Interview by John Kelly

Picture by Bob Hobby

HE lives in

basement

Street that

one was

dimmed. An affirma-

live "Yes" is inked

on the headboard of

the narrow bed. But

she doesn't use the

fat for tricks.

A dog-eared copy of

Vladimir Nabokov's "Invitation

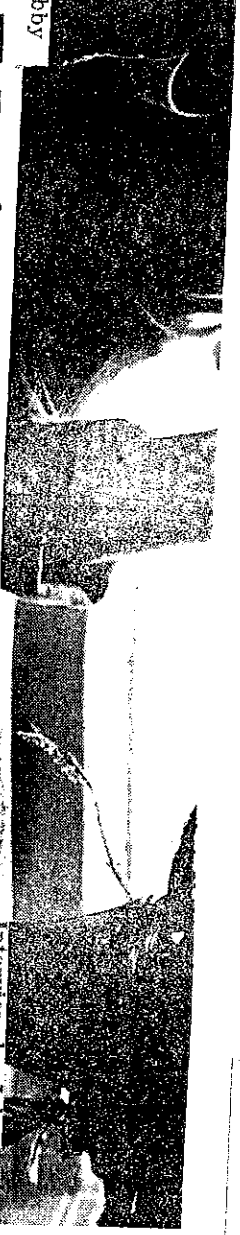
to a Beheading" is

scattered on the floor

beside the bed. In

the corner, a small

table holds a pair of



WEARDORIE'S STORY

Interview by John Kelly

They were telling

this in their

He doesn't

some days hope

the that he

one that he

marked with big

red letters denoting

AIDS and one she feels

which is obvious to all of

the other patients beside

her

Marjorie thinks the

anti-AIDS campaign has

been really ineffective

and that this is due to

the fact that the medical

profession still does not

really know enough about

it.

In particular, she is

critical of the fact that

it's so difficult to get

"the word" a clean needle

and syringe. She

vetters constantly at the

very edge of death.

Marjorie sometimes

thinks longingly of the

straight life, marriage

and children, a normal

sort of existence.

But she has accepted

that it's too late now.

As she says, she's half-

way up the hill, then

down again!

All you get when you

go to hospital is a load

of abuse. When you go

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Gay rights and the Church of Ireland

SIR — Regarding Emily O'Reilly's recent interview with David Norris (31 May). I regret that once again the story of the Church of Ireland curate who allegedly had a homosexual relationship and had to leave the ministry as a result has been dragged yet again through a newspaper. I sympathise with the unfortunate family involved because of the anguish they must relive each time the story is regurgitated. This story is regularly quoted as how a church in an unchristian act broke up a loving relationship.

I wish people would back off on this story and get to grips with the real issue involved. The Church of Ireland does not condone physical relationships outside the matrimony and it is completely inappropriate for an ordained clergyman to be involved in such a relationship. The fact that the relationship is heterosexual or homosexual is in a sense irrelevant because the church will only contemplate relationships within matrimony. It goes without saying that a clergyman living with a woman outside matrimony would be similarly inappropriate. The



• DAVID NORRIS

Church of Ireland is no different from other established christian churches in this respect.

I hope that gay rights activists and others will learn to respect the stand of the Church of Ireland in this regard and to address the real issue involved. I might point out that the Church of Ireland's stand on homosexuality has been moderate to say the least and the church could not be rightly accused of contributing in any way to the suppression of homosexuals.

Please can this issue be closed for once and for all? It really is unfair to the people involved to keep dragging up this distressing story again and again.

John Patten,
Public Relations Officer,
Church of Ireland Youth
Council,
65 Fitzwilliam Square,
Dublin 2.

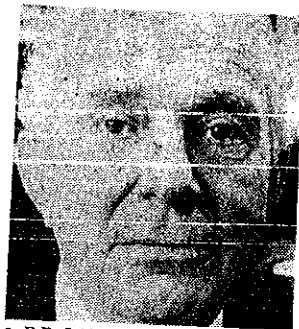
Majority of Irish Aids carriers are heterosexual

by TOM KELLY

HOMOSEXUALS and bisexuals accounted for only 1,213 of the total of 11,034 people who have so far been tested for infection by the Aids virus, according to the latest official statistics released by the Department of Health. The test results were positive in 62 of these 1,213 cases.

Of the 613 people known by the department to be infected with the virus, the vast majority — some 551 people — are heterosexual. The virus was contracted by 377 people through intravenous drug abuse and the number of haemophiliacs who became infected by imported contaminated blood amounted to 108 people.

Some homosexuals who think they may have been exposed to the Aids virus are avoiding having themselves medically tested because



• DR JAMES WALSH

they feel it is disadvantageous for them if they know they are Aids carriers, said a departmental spokesman. "Gays are very well informed about the advantages and disadvantages of having the test. Some feel it is a disadvantage to know they are HIV-positive," said Dr JH Walsh, the department's deputy chief medical officer. The Aids test is totally confidential and there is no suggestion that the statistics

are invalid because some people did not admit to their homosexuality when requesting to have the test.

A spokesman for the Gay Health Action Group said that a positive test result produced severe personal and psychological problems for a gay person, thus many were unwilling to be tested. "Whether or not gays take the test, they should ensure that they do not put anybody else at risk and that they look after their own health," he added.

The spokesman also pointed out that there were financial disadvantages for those who were known to be infected as some life assurance companies refuse to grant mortgages to people carrying the Aids virus.

Free advice about Aids is available from the Aids Helpline service, telephone: 01-307888, 7-10pm on Saturdays and 3-6pm on Mondays.

Sunday Tribune
26th July 1987

Incidence of Aids in Mountjoy stabilising

by **TOM KELLY**

THE number of prisoners at Mountjoy prison who are infected with the Aids virus has remained the same over the last two years. A total of 41 prisoners, 39 of whom are male and two female, are infected; a spokesman for the Department of Justice said.

The prisoners with the virus are segregated from the rest of the prisoners and are held in a separate unit and in the basement at Mountjoy. The two female prisoners are held in isolation in the female wing of the prison.

In the past ten days 12 prisoners, some of whom had been convicted of sexual offences against children and who were likely to be attacked by other prisoners, were transferred from the segregated Mountjoy basement to Arbour Hill prison thus freeing the basement area for the use of prisoners with the Aids virus.

With the extra accommodation which has just been made available, Mountjoy can now hold up to 50 prisoners with the Aids virus in segregated and medically acceptable conditions.

None of the prisoners with the virus at Mountjoy, has developed either full-blown Aids or the lesser form of the disease, Aids Related Complex, but are regarded as HIV positive as tests indicate they have been in contact with the virus and have Aids antibodies in their blood.

Aids victims, who are also allowed daily visits, have access to gym facilities, take part in Open University courses and some are studying for the Leaving Certificate. "Life goes on is a strange kind of way", says Mara de Lacey, an Aids counsellor who works with the prisoners. Most of those with the virus were intravenous drug-users at one time and contracted it through sharing needles.

Councillors at the prison aim to help the prisoners deal with their addiction problem and to be aware of the limitations imposed on their sexual and other activities by their infection with the Aids virus. The youngest affected prisoner at Mountjoy is 20 and the oldest is 37. The sentences being served range from one month to ten years.

A spokesman for the Prison Officers' Association said that the presence of prisoners with the Aids virus had not created problems for the prison staff and that there had been good co-operation between the Department of Justice and the prison officers. "It is being dealt with as just another operational problem," he added.

Of the 613 Irish people known to be infected with the Aids virus, about 130 have been diagnosed while in prison. The test for Aids in prison is entirely voluntary and prisoners who wish to take the test are counselled before and after the test result becomes known.

Those in need of treatment because of their infection or any other complaint are treated at either the Mater or Cherry Orchard hospitals and then return to the prison. A doctor has been assigned to Mountjoy to deal specifically and exclusively with the Aids-infected prisoners.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said that the main channel whereby Aids was being spread from homosexuals to heterosexuals was through drug-abuse and that the Aids problem in prisons was being satisfactorily dealt with.

Joe Costello of the Prisoners Rights Organisation said that there could be more medical monitoring of the infected prisoners but said that overall the prisoners were being treated well.

Evening Press
27th July 1987

AIDS AD.

Actors David Corti and Jane Snowden will feature as two young lovers in a 30-second "Safe sex" commercial to be screened on UTV on Saturday night — 24 hours after a ban on advertising condoms is lifted.

AIDS: condom for women

Women could soon have their own anti AIDS "condom." The contraceptive, invented by a former nurse and her engineer husband "fed up" with the lack of protection for women, has already been patented.

The device, which acts like a male condom in reverse can be worn inside a G string and inserted just before sex. Mrs. Pam Richardson, who designed the condom with her husband Michael, said: "It has more safety features than the male condom and there would be no problems with user education."

Easy fixes for the addicts behind bars

THE PICTURE he was painting was not pleasant. "There was two of us in the cell," he said. "I used to get the gear (heroin) through visits like, or when you were out and there were other ways." He named a prison officer who he said used to meet friends of his in city pubs and smuggle drugs into Mountjoy. "I had money. It wasn't hard," he explained.

The man drawing deeply on his cigarette in a flat complex last weekend was not an isolated case. There was another man who said he was speaking because he was "strung out" and desperately wanted to give up heroin. But it was too easy to get. He'd had a "fix" that morning. It didn't do much for him any more and his habit was not huge, but it helped him cope, he said. Both men were prisoners in their early twenties. They had gone straight on to heroin at fifteen — no hash (cannabis), no tabs (amphetamines), just gear by injection, straight, they said.

About the drug situation in prison they were hesitant. "It's like this," the smaller and thinner of the two said. "I was doing about £100 a day before I went inside. They gave me physoptone (a heroin substitute used to wean addicts off heroin in prison). I was dying; sweating, pains, the lot. It didn't stop after a few days, or a few weeks. I was on remand, visits every day.

"The mot started bringing in hash for my nerves. When she got that in, one day she brought in gear. She used to give it to me when we were kissing. I'd swallow it. It was in small packs, wrapped up. Then I'd poke it up later. End of story.

"When I got my sentence, I went out on temporary release after a while. I'd go out some weekends. I'd put it up my arse coming back in. When it was o.k. we'd do it."

This man said that he and his cellmate would "chase the dragon" (snort heroin), but there were others who would inject the drug using filter pens to force it into their veins. He claimed that more often fellows inside would smoke hash in "rollic" cigarettes. If you were connected outside, you were connected inside and once you had money, it was no problem to maintain a habit, they said.

It was by injecting a heroin mix through a filter pen that Christy Gamble died in Mountjoy some years ago. However, drugs experts say that the act of injecting itself is not the danger, it is the substances used to dilute heroin from its pure state that lead addicts unwittingly to dice with their lives.

Both men claimed that they had friends inside who were still getting heroin, although cannabis was more readily available. However, they did not really want to wreck things for their friends. They didn't think heroin was



Heroin abuse and AIDS are now rife in our jails. Noira. Hegarty spoke to prisoners and their families about the ease with which drugs are smuggled in and their attitudes to AIDS.

good, "it was hell, but drugs provided a release from the pressures of prison. With hindsight, one man admitted that he did not think he could have finished his sentence without drugs. "I'd probably have topped myself," he said.

The screws (prison officers) had not given them much hassle. When they thought about it now, the screws had to know what was going on. A lot of the prison officers were all right, they said. Most of them would not bring stuff in, but you knew whom to ask and whom not to ask. The men claimed that most of the prison officers turned a blind eye.

Garda sources back this up. They claim that in order to keep calm in the prison the officers do not create unnecessary hassle for themselves. "Why should they?" one senior Garda officer asked. "They are doing all right at the moment. There's nobody on the roof, no riots, no trouble. If they were to start searching every visitor who came to the prison, you can be sure they would have the prisoners on their backs for hassling their women. When the prisoners get angry the Department of Justice wants to know why. Suddenly Mountjoy is in the spotlight. So why bother?"

One mother of a former inmate said that she never brought in heroin to her son while he was serving time, because she wanted him off drugs. However, she added that the boy's girlfriend regularly passed over drugs both on visits and when he appeared at the Dublin Circuit Criminal Court.

It was difficult to pass drugs at the District Court, she said, as defendants are only seen on brief court appearances and then brought back to downstairs cells. Packets of cigarettes and anything else passed to prisoners by their families or friends are immediately checked.

But at the Circuit Criminal Court it is relatively easy to pass drugs, the mother said. "On Fridays it's mad down there. Everyone's flying everywhere. You can

hand it (heroin and cannabis) to anyone. Often the lads are waiting around the hall handcuffed to prison officers before they go into court. You only have to attract the screw's attention and you could pass stuff."

On busy days in the hallway of Court 14, but particularly on Fridays, accused people, jurors, legal counsel, gardai, families, friends, members of the public, prison officers and handcuffed prisoners mingle in packed and claustrophobic conditions. It is in such circumstances, it is alleged, that drugs are frequently passed to people in custody. The mother had heard too that the skylights beside Court 14 were sometimes used to smuggle drugs through to prisoners using the toilets beside a holding room downstairs.

Prison officers admit that in the court precincts proper, amid the confusion, drugs could be passing unseen in the crowd.

The former prisoners I spoke to last weekend also said that AIDS was rampant in Mountjoy, although very few inmates had actually volunteered for testing. They themselves figured they could have AIDS antibodies, but they did not want to know for sure. They had never been tested, although one admitted he had only recently come off heroin and the other said he was still using it.

There are currently around 20 prisoners in a special security wing of Mountjoy who have been diagnosed HIV Positive. These men decided to have the AIDS test. However, gardai say this figure is only the tip of a deadly iceberg. They put the real figure of carriers of the disease in custody at Mountjoy at about three times this number.

With the current AIDS crisis in Dublin, predominantly among drug-users, the transmission of AIDS antibodies through shared needles and sexual intercourse inside Mountjoy constitutes a lethal time-bomb waiting to be triggered some years hence, gardai say.

They are going all right at the moment. There is no trouble on the roof. No riots, no trouble. If they were to start searching every visitor who came to the prison, you can be sure they would have the prisoners on their backs for hassling their women. When the prisoners get angry the Department of Justice wants to know why. Suddenly Mountjoy is in the spotlight. So why bother? One mother of a former inmate said that she never brought in heroin to her son while he was serving time, because she wanted him off drugs. However, she added that the boy's girlfriend regularly passed over drugs both on visits and when he appeared at the Dublin Circuit Criminal Court. It was difficult to pass drugs at the District Court, she said, as defendants are only seen on brief court appearances and then brought back to downstairs cells. Packets of cigarettes and anything else passed to prisoners by their families or friends are immediately checked. But at the Circuit Criminal Court it is relatively easy to pass drugs, the mother said. "On Fridays it's mad down there. Everyone's flying everywhere. You can

B. News
30th July 1987

Row over Aids tests

West German Health Minister Rita Suessmuth yesterday demanded that officials of a northern town explain why they carried out Aids tests on children, some as young as six.

She said the tests had been required by Wesel town council for 20 children aged between six and 11 as a condition of sending them on sponsored holidays.

"When I look at the age groups in question, then I think Wesel owes an explanation," she said.

False AIDS fear led to suicide

Young mother Sharon Playle killed herself because she was convinced she had AIDS after watching a TV documentary on the disease.

Yet, the 30-year-old housewife had already taken a blood test which proved negative, an inquest heard.

She was found dead in a fume-filled car in the garage at her home near Grimsby in England.

Her grief-stricken husband Colin told the inquest that Sharon believed she had contracted the disease on a holiday in Yugoslavia.

"She developed an allergy and had to have three injections at the resort's medical centre," he explained. "She then convinced herself that these injections were the cause of it all."

"No matter what we said, nobody could reassure her that she did not have AIDS."

Independent
30th July 1987

Condom advert approved

Condoms will be advertised on British television for the first time on Saturday night after approval by the Independent Broadcasting Authority. The broadcast, featuring London International's Durex brand, comes as the Government is promoting the use of condoms in its anti-Aids campaign.

Under IBA guidelines the advertisement will be shown after 9pm. It must also be restrained, in good taste and not promote promiscuity. The pack can be shown but not the product itself.

'AIDS explosion' fear on babies

By EILISH O'REGAN

IRELAND is on the brink of an AIDS explosion as the number of babies born to mothers with the killer disease increases at an alarming rate, it was claimed yesterday.

Without adequate practical and educational training, the virus will inevitably spread at a chronic rate, Ms. Mary Clune of the Women and AIDS group warned the Women's Conference in Dublin.

She said that many people are HIV positive through contact with somebody who has the virus either by sleeping with them or sharing a syringe — but they are unaware they are infected because they have never been tested.

Already, it has been shown that Ireland has the highest number of HIV positive babies of any EEC country, per head of population.

A former heroin addict

Women in conference

told how she received "no sympathy or counselling" when she was informed in a Dublin hospital that she had the virus. And she claimed that she had been trying for six months in vain to find a dentist who would treat her, because she felt she had a responsibility to say she had the virus in case dental equipment was not properly sterilised for the next patient.

The women said that she had slept with men for money to feed her addiction and she had shared needles with friends. These people might now have the virus themselves, but they would never know unless they went for tests.

"I believe that three or four times as many people than is officially known are walking around with AIDS in this country", she added.

Wall Street Journal
30th July 1987

Institut Merieux agreed to join with Cambridge Bioscience to develop an AIDS vaccine. In return for an undisclosed payment, the French firm will receive a license to market any resulting vaccine products.

Wall Street Journal
30th July 1987

Reagan named a homosexual physician, a Catholic cardinal and a former member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to a commission on the AIDS epidemic. The appointment of Dr. Frank Lilly, chairman of the genetics department at New York's Albert Einstein Medical Center, ended an internal White House dispute over whether the panel should include a homosexual.

Institut Merieux Joins U.S. Firm On AIDS Vaccine

French Concern Signs Pact
With Cambridge Bioscience
For Research, Marketing

By MARILYN CHASE

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
SAN FRANCISCO—An American biotech company and a French vaccine maker have joined forces to work on AIDS prevention.

Cambridge Bioscience Corp. of Worcester, Mass., and Institut Merieux of Lyon said they signed a research pact to develop a vaccine against acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Under terms, Institut Merieux will pay Cambridge Bioscience an undisclosed amount to broaden its vaccine-research program for the fatal viral disease. In return, Merieux will receive an exclusive world-wide license to market any resulting vaccine products.

The collaboration combines the research capability of Cambridge, which draws upon a number of prominent Harvard University scientists as consultants, and the world-wide vaccine-manufacturing and distribution track record of Merieux. A third company, Connaught Laboratories of Canada is expected to help with clinical trials.

The companies said they won't limit their research to any one particular vaccine technology, but will broadly investigate a number of approaches. They include recombinant DNA (or gene-spliced) vaccines, subunit vaccines using a harmless viral protein, vaccines based on vaccinia (or cow-pox), and so-called anti-idiotypes, which utilize an antibody to the antibody containing an internal image of the virus that is safe but immunogenic.

All vaccines work on the principle of using natural or synthetic viral material to trick the body into mounting an immune response that later will attack and kill a real viral invader.

Gerald F. Buck, chairman and chief executive of Cambridge Bioscience, said "It's important not to see AIDS vaccine work in terms of winners and losers but in terms of collaborators."

The French-American collaboration follows announcement of an earlier AIDS vaccine pact between two U.S. companies, Merck & Co. and Repligen. A number of companies are working on an AIDS vaccine, including Genentech Inc.; Chiron Inc. in collaboration with the U.S. unit of Basel-based Ciba-Geigy AG; Genetic Systems Inc.; and Viral Technologies.

Merieux sells vaccines in 160 countries, and has a major market presence in Africa, which suffers uncounted numbers of AIDS cases and is believed by many to be the cradle of the AIDS virus.

Jacques Armand, Merieux director of research, said: "Progress in vaccines is very slow. But the dimensions of AIDS, and the fact that we're dealing with blood, sex and a dread disease (places) people under pressure. The pressure will be high to test the product in animals and in man. But it's impossible to tell you dates. We don't have a crystal ball."

William Haseltine, a scientist at Harvard and Boston's Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, said the recent disappointing results obtained by several groups in chimpanzee studies means building a useable AIDS vaccine "isn't going to be as simple as putting in purified envelope glycoprotein," or pieces of the virus's outer coat, in man.

Japan Says Domestic Prices Highest of Industrial Nations

TOKYO—Japan said its domestic goods and services are the most expensive among

Irish Independent

31st July 1987

AIDS vaccine still distant

A VACCINE against AIDS will not be available until the next century, leading doctors and scientists said yesterday.

Safe drugs to lessen the effects for those who already have the virus may also be several years away, they warned.

They were speaking in Edinburgh in a debate sponsored by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry.

Dr. Mike Hall, of chemical giant Roche, said a combination of education and preventative action was likely to win the battle against the epidemic if not the war against the virus.

"The prospect for an effective and safe AIDS vaccine still look distant and hence eradication of HIV (AIDS virus) will probably be unachievable in our lifetime," he said.

Roche is currently testing DDC — a drug to help prolong the life of AIDS sufferers and curb the spread of the virus within the body. But trials on 60 guinea pigs have shown some side effects.

The ability of the AIDS virus to change in the body is proving the main problem and challenged the Attorney-General Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, to bring a case of criminal contempt against him.