

Print Media



National HIV and AIDS

Archives

#NationalHIVArchives



6th to 10th July 1987

AIDS: a question of murder...

LAST WEEK in the U.S. saw a new twist to the horror of the AIDS story. A man who was suffering from the fatal virus apparently sold blood which caused others to become infected.

He has now been arrested and may be tried for murder.

Tests are now supposed to detect infected blood and such tests have been in use in Ireland for some time to screen all

donors. But that consideration aside, the case raised the spectre of the most horrific new cycle of crime and punishment connected with the spread of AIDS.

For if action can be taken against someone who knows they have AIDS and knowingly puts others at risk through donating blood, what of those who infect others through sexual contact or drug abuse practices? Are they not likely to be charged with crime too?

PUB CONDOM MACHINE SAFER IN LADIES' LOO

WOMEN who go to powder their noses in the toilet of a Cork city bar are now going to find more than powder awaiting them because the owner has installed — wait for it — a condom dispenser.

The decision to put the machine in the ladies toilet is an attempt to be discreet, but some female customers say the idea is "insulting" and "stupid".

Women customers at O'Driscoll's Bar in Douglas have been shocked to see the new machine which sells two condoms for a .£1. Bar owner, Liam O'Driscoll, said he thought the idea of putting the machine

in the ladies toilet was a genteel way" of introducing the machine to the public.

It has been decided not to place one in the men's toilet for fear of it being "ridiculed and vandalised".

It would be regarded as a bit of a joke if it were put in the men's toilet", he said.

Mr. O'Driscoll said nowadays there was a lot of pressure on women to carry condoms around in their handbags.

One irate customer has made no secret of how she feels. "What use have we for condoms — and we meant to buy them for men?"

Evening Press
7th July 1987

Criminal law won't control AIDS spread

Fears in the United States that out-of-control AIDS patients are seeking vengeance by exposing others to their virus have fuelled demands for criminal sanctions. Approximately 30 criminal cases — alleging intentional transmissions by biting, spitting, donating infected blood or having sexual intercourse — have been filed across the U.S. against AIDS patients.

Florida and Idaho have amended their laws to make it an offense to wilfully expose another to the AIDS virus. Fourteen states have similar bills pending.

True, malicious transmission of a potentially lethal virus is just as dangerous as other behaviour that criminal law already prohibits. There is no reason why persons in high-risk groups who endanger the public should be exempt from ordinary criminal law.

But, first, it is arguable that what is thought to be a crime is not the same as proving it in a court of law. And, second, it can be argued that to create a criminal law applicable solely to AIDS carriers would be counterproductive from a public-health perspective.

There is an understandable outrage when any citizen acts maliciously to place another's life in jeopardy. But we live under a legal system — in which it is necessary to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the person intended to transmit the virus and did not inform his partner of his condition.

It is nearly impossible to know what went on, and what was said, in the privacy of a

sexual encounter that may have taken place years ago. Did the person know that he harboured the virus? Did he inform his sexual partner? Did they engage in "safer" sex? Had the partner other sexual encounters or intravenous drug experiences with infected persons? These questions illustrate the difficulty of establishing guilt and innocence in a consenting sexual relationship.

Proving intent in cases of donations of infected blood is even more problematic.

Is it possible, for example, in the case of a person who is destitute and gives a blood for money to prove a specific intent to cause death? Joseph Edward Markowski, who is charged with attempted murder in Los Angeles, said: "I was so hard up for money that I didn't give a damn".

If officials went to ensure that there are no future donations of AIDS-infected blood, there are other ways to achieve the objective. In most of the known cases of persistent donations, payments were involved. The practice of being paid for blood should be, as it is in much of Europe, abolished or severely regulated.

The overwhelming majority of cases of AIDS transmission are outside the reach of criminal law and will go unnoticed. Those who do come to the attention of the police are likely to be the poorest and least articulate of those harbouring the virus. This makes criminal law a lottery affecting primarily the most vulnerable.

History has shown that the use of criminal law has rarely had a positive public-health effect. Laws in nearly half the states making it a crime to intentionally transmit a venereal disease are widely regarded as a failure and have fallen into disuse. The reason is that criminal law is ill suited to deal with a case in which there are sexual relations with a consenting adult who can and should take precautions to avoid transmission of the disease.

Transmission of a virus does not easily fit into the model of a guilty offender and an innocent victim.

Indeed, there is good reason to believe that widespread use of criminal law to prosecute AIDS carriers would make it more difficult to combat the disease, and that coercion will drive the epidemic underground.

More cash sought for Aids fight

MORE MONEY to combat Aids is being sought for the health budget by John Moore, the Secretary of State for Social Services, in the current public expenditure review by the Treasury.

Mr Moore, a former Treasury minister, will argue with John Major, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, that the health budget has to be increased to take account of the extra burdens caused by Aids.

Figures released by the DHSS yesterday showed a sharp rise in the number of new cases, but offi-

By Colin Brown
Political Correspondent

cialists said this was a result of clearing a backlog in the figures.

The Government has provided money for the fight against Aids on an *ad hoc* basis, but Norman Fowler, Mr Moore's predecessor at the department, is said to have "scraped every barrel" for funds for the Aids programme. Money earmarked for future schemes was "borrowed" for Aids spending, according to DHSS sources.

The discovery of expensive anti-Aids drugs, which are now being made available on the NHS, has added to the costs.

The Treasury was also persuaded to release more cash from contingencies to support the Government's high-profile assault against Aids, which included sending anti-Aids leaflets to every household.

The advertising campaign against Aids cost about £10m, and £3.6m was allocated to Aids clinics in December, 1985. More money was provided but it never

matched the demands made by Michael Meacher, the Labour spokesman, who warned that between £50m and £100m was needed.

Mr Moore supports the Government's drive for cost-effectiveness. He will not be seeking such large sums, but any increase in the health budget will add to the strains on Government spending, which promise to make this one of the longest and most difficult summer reviews for some years.

Aids figures rise, page 3

Irish Times
7th July 1987

Condoms hand-out at bulls fiesta

THE annual San Fermin festival at Pamplona, Spain that made the running of the bulls world famous blasted off with its traditional rocket fired from city hall — and a campaign to supply merry-makers with condoms.

The government of Navarre province and a city commission for the prevention of AIDS plans to give away condoms to the thousands of people who have thronged to the city for the July festival.

Thousands of aficionados jammed the cobblestone plaza and raised their wine gourds to toast the 16th-century fiesta in honour of Saint Fermin that Ernest Hemingway made famous in his 1926 novel "The Sun Also Rises".

This morning, the first of eight "encierros" — the running of the bulls — was to get under way, in what Hemingway called the "morning's pleasure".

Irish Times
8th July 1987

Condom machine out, say gardai

GARDAI in Douglas, Co Cork, have instructed a publican, Mr Liam O'Driscoll, owner of O'Driscoll's Bar and Restaurant, to remove a condom vending machine installed on Monday in the ladies' toilet.

"It's a shame but I'll have to take it down. I wouldn't like to upset the gardai. They have told me that the only places where condoms may be legally sold are chemist shops, doctors' surgeries, dispensaries and family planning clinics," Mr O'Driscoll said yesterday.

He had sold six packets of condoms in the 12 hours that the machine was installed, and had received one anonymous telephone complaint.

"It was very discreet, a white dispenser set into the wall with the single word 'Protection' in small print in one corner. A nun could have walked in and not spotted it. Unless you were using condoms already, you wouldn't have known what it was," Mr O'Driscoll said.

Customer reaction had been very positive, he said. "Several people have said to me they prefer to buy condoms this way, rather than across the counter in a chemist shop, which can be embarrassing."

The dispenser was supplied and fitted by an Irish company, Vendcare Products Ltd.

Daily Mail
9th July 1987

AIDS is now the biggest lady killer

NEW YORK: Cancer has been overtaken by AIDS as the biggest killer of young women in the city.

Latest figures show that last year AIDS caused the deaths of 186 women aged between 25 and 34 in New York, while cancer claimed 123.

The year before cancer killed 122 and AIDS 97.

Victims are usually from a socially poor background.

'The profile of these young women who get AIDS is poverty, drug abuse and being from a ethnic minority group,' said a New York health department spokesman.

~~GALWAY ADVERTISER~~
9/7/87

Not Enough Privacy for People with AIDS

Thoughtless G.P.s are submitting blood specimens which clearly bear the patient's name to the laboratory for testing for the deadly Aids virus claimed the Western Branch of Aids Alliance this week.

And the founders of the Alliance have called for a review of the whole area of confidentiality in relation to people with Aids.

Speaking at a press conference founders Evelyn Stevens and Angela Savage alleged that some local G.P.s were sending in blood samples with the patient's name on them. Should he/she be discovered to be Antibody Positive his/her life could be made very difficult as a result of such a lack of confidentiality, they said.

They went on to applaud the system operated by the Sexually Transmitted Diseases clinic in Galway whereby patients are allocated a number to ensure anonymity when specimens are sent to the laboratory.

"When a man died of Aids a while back in the Western Health Board area the Board gave out all his personal details. That was totally uncalled for. We feel confidentiality is paramount where persons with Aids are concerned. The West

is a small area and should someone contract Aids life could be very uncomfortable for him if people were to learn of it. We met a haemophiliac in Dublin who has Aids and he is terrified of people finding out as he works in a shop. People wouldn't shop there if they knew he believes".

Mss. Stevens and Savage told the press conference that the Department of Health announced recently that there are five Antibody Positive people recorded in the West of Ireland. However, they feel the figure is much higher.

They outlined that a fallacy exists that Aids is a gay disease, also that people with Aids are all wasted, emaciated looking individuals. This is totally untrue, said Evelyn Stevens. "People in the West who think they are safe because they are not gay are fooling themselves. Similarly, those who expect to recognise an Aids person by a thin, weary look are all wrong. The "fine thing" in the disco could as easily have Aids as anyone else".

Be Careful

They advise those intending to socialise in Galway over the summer, also students

(Continued on back page)

Not Enough Privacy For People With AIDS

(Continued from Page 1)

travelling abroad to carry condoms as a precautionary measure.

Aids Action Alliance is seeking 30 volunteers for its Cairde training course. Cairde is a voluntary group affiliated to Aids Action Alliance and is a confidential support group for people with Aids, Arc (Aids related complex), or who are HIV positive as well as their friends, partners and relatives. With the health cutbacks there will be less hospital beds and Aids people will have to be looked after at home, predicts Aids Action Alliance. Cairde would help in that capacity. Volunteers who can be from any age group and

any walk of life should be accepting, non judgmental, caring people who can keep confidences. The training course commences in September.

Evelyn Stevens and Angela Savage are critical of the Western Health Board's approach to Aids, saying it is at best short-sighted. "The Health care people have some good videos but we feel more advertising needs to be done. The Health Board is saving money by advertising the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Clinic number every three weeks but that is not enough".

They believe a comprehensive education programme should be introduced whereby an education officer would visit schools and discuss Aids as part of an overall sex education programme.

They recommend two books on Aids - *Aids - The Problem in Ireland*, by Dr. Derek Friedman, £3.95. And *Aids Information Booklet*, £1.50. Aids Action Alliance hope to run a series of advertise-

ments promoting those books.

Anyone interested in fundraising for the organisation or in becoming a Cairde volunteer should contact either Evelyn Stevens or Angela Savage at (091) 24411.

Mary O'Connor.

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Guardian
9th July 1987

Aids boards in cash call

Health boards have asked the Scottish Office to treble its allocation of funds for new drug projects because of Aids-related problems

The Scottish Office set aside £300,000 in April for new schemes, which was criticised as inadequate.

The bulk of the applications have come from Greater Glasgow, which asked for nearly £350,000; Lothian, £220,000; and

Tayside, £156,000.

The Aids problem is severest in those areas. In Edinburgh, in the Lothian region, an estimated 60 per cent of intravenous drug users carry the virus.

The Scottish Office has defended the allocation of £300,000 as "a significant amount of money and a major contribution to help encourage and develop local drug initiatives".

Mosquitoes: can they really give you AIDS?

JUST when the public seemed about convinced that AIDS isn't an easy disease to catch, an article in The Atlanta Constitution last week reported evidence that the AIDS virus can be carried by the common mosquito.

The story spread across the nation with the speed of an influenza virus, mostly because it revived a largely discounted theory that mosquitoes can transmit AIDS like so many "flying syringes".

In the study, researchers at Bionetics Research, Inc., a private laboratory in Rockville, Md., fed mosquitoes blood contaminated with the AIDS virus. Two days later they found the virus still present in the stomachs of some of the insects.

What gave the Constitution's story irresistible impact was the strong implication that Dr. Robert C. Gallo of the National Cancer Institute, one of the leading pioneers in AIDS research, had headed the study.

Flying syringes

"I am angry that my name has been used like this", Gallo said, adding that he merely supplied samples of AIDS contaminated blood and provided for the lab work through NCI's ongoing contract with Bionetics.

The research was actually initiated by Drs. Mark Whiteside and Caroline MacLeod of the Institute for Tropical Medicine, a privately funded facility in North Miami. The Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory in Vero Beach supplied the mosquitoes.

"It was collaborative effort", says MacLeod.

Whiteside and MacLeod have been the main proponents of the mosquito theory of AIDS transmission for years. They base their case largely on Belle Glade, Fla., a farming community of 20,000 that has the highest rate of AIDS in the United States — 375 per 100,000. Half of these cases, they contend, don't occur among male homosexuals or other high-risk groups. They suggest that the squalid living conditions in the town, including exposure to mosquitoes and other insects, encourage infection with the AIDS virus or with other organisms that trigger a dormant AIDS virus.

The vast majority of AIDS observers disagree. They cite the pattern of AIDS spread in Africa. Malaria, which is transmitted by mosquitoes, affects all age groups, old and young alike. But the incidence of AIDS among children and the elderly is quite low there.

New research

The cases that have occurred in these age groups are blamed on dirty needles and widespread transfusion of contaminated blood. In Belle Glade investigators from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control have long since concluded that AIDS has primarily come from promiscuous sex and intravenous drug use.

Furthermore, it seems doubtful that the mosquito's physiology permits it to transmit AIDS. In diseases like malaria, for example, the insect ingests the causative parasite when it feeds on a victim and then introduces it into the next individual through saliva when it feeds several days later.

But one expert says bluntly: "It just doesn't happen with AIDS. Studies in various labs fail to show that the AIDS virus reproduces and multiplies inside the mosquito, he notes.

"Whiteside and MacLeod have no evidence except that a mosquito can take in blood, says Gallo.

That won't prevent the Florida scientists from presenting their case anew this week at a conference convened by the federal Office of Technology Assessment on the mosquito-AIDS controversy.

London Times
9th July 1987

Doctors' and patients' Aids rights

From the President of the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association

Sir, Your leading article of today (July 3) is welcome, but does not ask why doctors should deal with Aids in a manner totally different to any other disease.

What are the arguments for this unique exception? We are told that as Aids is fatal the patient should be counselled about the implications of a positive test before it is done. But we frequently test for the possibility of many fatal (and even horrible) conditions.

It would be intolerable if we had to burden our patients with the spectre of them all before ever carrying out an investigation to eliminate them. That would be taking the doctrine of "informed consent" to cruel lengths. People come to their doctor (for one reason) because we do *not* scare the wits out of them every time we do a test. Yet it is advocated with Aids.

We test for other transmissible diseases (sexual and otherwise) so that we can trace contacts and protect partners or the public. Yet Aids is to be different. Admittedly, conversion to HIV positive may take up to three months, so that false negatives may occur. So they may with many other diseases (gonorrhoea included). False negatives are common and we are used to allowing for them.

However, the most fundamental objection to the present official guidelines is that they deprive the doctor of clinical judgement and clinical initiative. I find it incomprehensible that the leaders of the British Medical Association should now wish to persuade their membership that, so far as Aids is concerned, they are not to be trusted to act with compassion, sensitivity and wisdom, and that Aids is so different that they must not exercise their professional discretion. Clearly, the membership remain as unconvinced as I do. I congratulate them.

Yours faithfully,
EDGAR PRICE (President,
Hospital Consultants and
Specialists Association),
The Old Rectory,
Skirpenbeck, York.
July 3.

From Miss E. A. Karn and Mr Robert J. Pratt

Sir, We strongly condemn the BMA conference decision, taken on July 2, to allow physicians to test their patients for the presence of antibodies to HIV (the screening test which indicates infection with the Aids virus) without their consent.

Currently, good medical practice demands reasonable blood and body fluid precautions on all patients, irrespective of what is known regarding the serological status for anti-HIV (presence of antibodies).

It seems from this decision that physicians may not be following current practice advice, which would protect them from HIV acquisition in a health-care setting, that is, routine blood and body fluid precautions in all clinical settings. Using these precautions only for those people who are found to be antibody positive will produce a false sense of security amongst health-care workers as a negative test does not necessarily imply lack of infectivity.

We appreciate our medical colleagues' concern for our health and safety but our skills and knowledge as nurses are sufficient to protect us from this virus. We deplore this decision, taken by the BMA, as it is in contravention of basic human rights and may be counterproductive in the trust the patient may have in his/her doctor.

Yours sincerely,
EVANGELINE KARN,
R. J. PRATT,
Charing Cross Hospital (Fulham),
Department of Continuing
Education,
Charing Cross School of Nursing,
Claybrook Road, W6.

From Dr A. M. Nussey

Sir, The leadership of the BMA has come out strongly against doctors exercising their clinical judgment in doing a test for HIV infection without prior consent of patients. If there is any logic in their stance, tests for syphilis, which have been widespread for the best part of this century, should have come under the same interdict.

They should not forget, however, that failure to carry out such tests, in many instances such as pregnancy, routinely, could be regarded as serious neglect. Doctors have to be trusted to use available investigative facilities and be responsible for how they use the results.

Yours faithfully,
A. M. NUSSEY,
Heron Close,
46 Meadow Hill Road,
Birmingham, West Midlands.
July 3.

From Dr Robert Hancock

Sir, With respect, your leading article concerning Aids has missed the fundamental problem debated at the BMA annual meeting in Bristol.

This problem was clearly identified on page 3 (July 3), where Dr Laurien Allan, an anaesthetist at Northwick Park Hospital, west London, said doctors had rights equal to patients. This statement is fundamentally wrong for the medical profession. Patients' rights must always be put before those of the doctors. Patients have a fundamental right to be told beforehand about Aids testing.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT HANCOCK,
138 Pavilion Road, SW1.
July 3.

SO THE AS AIDS IS CONSIDERED, MAY BE REGARDED AS SERIOUS DISEASE

Cork Examiner
10th July 1987

Free movement for AIDS victims

PEOPLE suffering from AIDS are free to circulate within the 12 member states of the European Community, the EEC Commission said yesterday.

Measures proposed by the German region of Bavaria to close Germany's borders to all AIDS patients from abroad were strongly condemned by the Commission. The Federal Government is currently considering the Bavarian proposals which, the EEC Commission stressed, are contrary to EEC rules on the free movement of citizens.

Health ministers of the 12 in a meeting last May expressly reiterated EEC principals on free movement and equal treatment for all EEC citizens when they issued a statement on AIDS. They also stressed that national governments should avoid to take contradictory decisions in relation to AIDS which might result in discriminatory policies.

A spokesman for Social Affairs Commissioner Manuel Marin cautioned this morning against emotional reactions which were not justified from a medical point of view. He said that EEC governments are allowed to take measures for the protection of public health, but only in exceptional cases related to a certain number of infectious diseases.

4 Evening Herald, Friday, July 10, 1987

Reagan's son in Aids shock

RONALD REAGAN Junior, son of the U.S. president, has seen a dozen of his best friends go through agony and die of Aids.

Now, angry at the government's lack of urgency in fighting the disease, he is about to embarrass his father by "starring" in a shock video.

The explicit, half-hour film warns of the dangers of Aids and shows how sex can be safe.

Produced by Ronald Jr. himself, it is billed as the first Aids awareness film aimed at people who are NOT homosexuals or drug users.

In intimate detail, couples are shown the best way to avoid falling victim to Aids.

One scene shows young Reagan holding a condom and a tube of spermicide jelly up to the camera and saying: "Get them — and learn how to use them."

He finished taping the video this week, and plans to show it to his dad as soon as editing is complete.

He thinks it will embarrass the president and force him to do more to combat Aids.

"The U.S. government is not moving fast enough to stop the spread of Aids," he says.

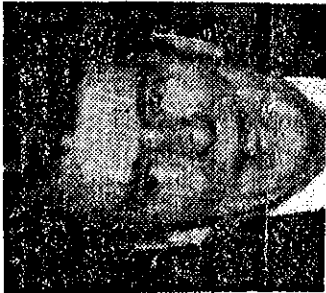
"My wife and I have lost at least a dozen close friends to this horrible disease."

As well as the video, 29-year-old Ronnie has taped a 30-second TV commercial inviting viewers to send an avalanche of mail to their Congressmen.

With a smile, he tells viewers that they might also write to "someone higher up."



VIDEO SHOCK Ronald Reagan Junior.



RONALD REAGAN: Embarrassed.

SV

Irish Times
10th July 1987

20 vicars 'have AIDS'

AT least 20 Church of England clergymen are suffering from AIDS, according to a campaigning vicar. The Rev Tony Higton, who wants them to be offered help and compassion, criticised the Church of England, saying it ignores homosexuality among the clergy.

On the eve of today's General Synod, which opens at York University, Mr Higton, of Hawkwell, Essex, said: "I have been approached by clergy who are absolutely petrified to admit they have homosexual tendencies. They find themselves in a dreadful turmoil.

"It is time the Church started taking the problem more seriously: as around 20 clergymen out of 10,000 are already dying from the disease and 400 are already on the mailing list for Gay Christians," he said.

Mr Higton is asking clergy attending the synod to sign his private motion calling for Church help for homosexual clergymen and a declaration that homosexual acts, sex before marriage and adultery are sinful.

He believes it totally incompatible for someone to be a clergyman and a practising homosexual.

The Rev Richard Kirker of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement said Mr Higton's figure on AIDS sufferers was probably "erring on the side of caution." — (PA).

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Wall Street Journal
10th July 1987

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**THE EC COMMISSION WARNS West
Germany on AIDS bans.**

Any move to deport AIDS-carrying EC citizens or to bar them from entering Germany would violate EC guarantees of freedom of movement for community nationals, the commission says. The statement comes in response to news reports that Bavaria plans to propose such measures soon in the Bundesrat. The only way Germany legally could keep out AIDS carriers from other EC nations would be to apply the same restrictions to its own citizens, the officials contend.

A representative for Bavaria wouldn't confirm that his government plans to put forward national legislation, but he says such a move is "conceivable." The state already has compulsory testing for groups including prostitutes, prison inmates and drug users. It's unclear whether the commission would mount a legal challenge to any German AIDS legislation, but one official says he thinks Bundesrat adoption of such steps is unlikely anyhow.

The Federal Criminal Office in Wiesbaden confirms that the names of identified AIDS victims are being entered in police computers. The Social Democrats term it "an attempt to create the total AIDS police state."

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SV

Wall Street Journal
10th July 1987

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AIDS was the leading cause of death for women 25 to 34 years old in New York City last year; the city health department reported. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome replaced cancer as the most common cause of death for women in that age group. The health department said the figures show "the connection between intravenous drug use and women is growing."
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