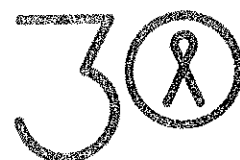


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Cancer drug may be AIDS cure

TESTS of a new AIDS drug originally designed to treat cancer are expected to start at St. Stephen's Hospital, London, next month.

Dr. Brian Gazzard, consultant physician at the hospital, is applying for ethical approval to give the drug, Contracan, to about 20 patients in the early stages of the disease.

Laboratory tests show that Contracan can reduce replication of the AIDS virus, according to Medirace, the firm set up to finance the drug's development.

The hope is that it could be used in a cocktail with the only approved AIDS drug, AZT. That would mean doses of AZT could be reduced, thus cutting the risk of dangerous side-effects, particularly anaemia, said Medirace's director, Mr. Ian Gowrie-Smith.

Contracan is being developed as a cancer drug by Dr. Kosta Atastolov and his team at the Hammersmith Hospital and the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, London. Results of trials involving patients at the Hammersmith and in Bristol have been encouraging, says Medirace.

The drug appears to stop cancerous cells replicating by changing the proportions of stearic acid and oleic acid within the cells.

A second AIDS vaccine has been approved for testing on humans in the United States. It will be given to up to 40 uninfected homosexuals at the Pacific Medical Centre in Seattle.

Developed by scientists at Oncogen, a subsidiary of the Bristol-Myers multi-national drug firm, it consists of the vaccinia virus — used for immunising against smallpox — engineered to carry a gene from the AIDS virus, HIV.

The aim is to trick the body's immune system into thinking it is being invaded by HIV and so to mount defences which will protect it from infection.

However, leading British scientists are opposed to using vaccinia to immunise against AIDS because of evidence that it can cause a smallpox-like disease if given to a person who is unknowingly carrying HIV.

The first British vaccine is expected to be tested on humans next year. America's first AIDS vaccine was approved for testing in August.

Independent
21st December 1987

Gay rights test over sacking

Trade union lawyers plan to turn the case of a gay cinema projectionist, sacked when his colleagues claimed he was an Aids risk, into a homosexual rights test case, Nick Cohen writes.

The Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance will appeal next month against an industrial tribunal's decision to uphold the dismissal of Michael Buck, who worked in Letchworth, Hertfordshire.

He lost his case even though there was no evidence that he had been infected with Aids.

Irish Times
21st December 1987

Stars in AIDS charity auction

PAUL and Linda McCartney, Shirley Bassey, Boy George and boxer Frank Bruno are joining together to help raise funds for AIDS sufferers at a charity auction today.

The auction is being organised by millionaire tycoon Richard Branson, who hopes it will raise up to £100,000 for AIDS telephone help lines, education and support projects around Britain.

More than 100 items of jewellery, photography and memorabilia donated by showbusiness stars will go under the hammer in London.

Body Shop boss Anita Roddick, comic Lenny Henry, Paul Young, Koo Stark, Cynthia Payne, Pete Townsend and royal dress designers David and Elizabeth Emanuel also will be there.

Among items being auctioned is the personal log-book penned by Richard Branson during his epic hot air balloon crossing of the Atlantic to Ireland this summer.

The log, which has never been published, reveals desperate 11th hour letters by Branson, sending love and goodbyes to his family when the balloon voyage seemed set for disaster. It is expected to fetch up to £20,000.

The pop group Queen donated a drum kit to the auction, Irish heartthrob Feargal Sharkey gave a favourite waistcoat and singer Boy George sent in his old dreadlocks — strands of hair from times past.

All money raised will go to the Virgin Healthcare Foundation, which launched a new brand of condoms last month in an effort to stop the spread of the disease.

'AIDS newsletter for gays' rumpus

A LEEDS health chief today backed an AIDS newsletter promoting safer sex among gays after it came under attack.

Coun. Keith Loudon (Con. Cookridge) was concerned that the newsletter, which contained an article headed *Living Gay... Loving Safe*, could fall into the hands of impressionable youngsters.

But Leeds Health Committee Chairman Coun. Lorna Cohen said there was nothing to fear as the article was looking at the issue in a sensible way.

About 2,000 copies of the Newsletter have been published by the city council's Health Unit for distribution among health authorities, family practitioner committees and the Leeds Council for Voluntary Services.

The article says that *Living Gay... Loving Safe* is the theme of a safer sex programme launched by the voluntary body AIDS Advice.

It says the organisation is producing "play safe" material for distribution at the region's gay venues and promoting a "hot and healthy night" at Rockshots nightclub in Leeds.

The article adds that the aim of the programme is to make safer sex appealing, erotic and fun and Mr Ray Gaston, AIDS Advice co-ordinator, writes: "We intend to make the programme sex positive."

He argues that many sexual activities that pose no or little risk of coming into contact with AIDS need emphasising.

Involved

But Coun. Loudon said: "I don't think the council should be involved with putting out articles as strong as this. Everything possible should be done to help AIDS victims and combat the disease and this newsletter doubtless serves a purpose."

"However, articles like this shouldn't fall into the hands of impressionable youngsters and that is my fear."

But Coun. Cohen accused Coun. Loudon of having a blinkered attitude.

She said: "The piece does not advocate young people to take part in homosexual activities. It takes a sensible view of the problem."

"It accepts that homosexuality is a part of life and is looking at ways on how this terrible AIDS can be checked."

Catholics and condoms Nihil obstat?

WASHINGTON, DC

AMERICA'S Roman Catholic bishops, labouring to devise a church policy about the threat of AIDS, have stumbled over prophylactic devices. Their statement, "The many faces of AIDS: a gospel response", was issued on December 11th by the administrative board, but opposition to it is so vehement that the full conference will probably see a fight next autumn to get the report changed. The Vatican is no help; it has yet to pronounce on the question.

The bishops want a public educational effort both to help people guard against AIDS and to combat intolerance. Since sexual practices are one vehicle for the transmission of AIDS, the statement concedes that mere theoretical instruction is not enough. People have to have practical advice, within a moral framework to be sure, but advice that tells them about what condoms or other things can do. It is this passage that has outraged, among other conservative prelates, Cardinal John O'Connor who, as archbishop of New York, probably has more AIDS victims under his pastoral care than any bishop in the world.

Cardinal O'Connor declared at once that he would not tolerate any instruction being given about condoms in the Catholic

schools of his archdiocese or in its hospitals or youth programmes. It was "a very grave mistake", he thought, to have published the paper without waiting to put it before the full conference. He was joined by senior prelates in other parts of the country, and they may easily get support from the Vatican. The American conference is not, in fact, presuming to tell its members what they must do. To the extent that its advice prevails, it will prevail because those who teach in the church's many institutions find its conclusions hard to avoid.

The moral theologians will have a field day with aspects of the question which the conference statement did not go into. Is it possible, for example, to treat a defence against AIDS as quite different from a defence against impregnation? That would give the condom a new, albeit restricted, theological legitimacy. The paper relies chiefly on the argument that some people will do as they wish in disregard of pastoral admonitions, and the interest of society requires that something be done for them.

The one theological argument which the statement does make use of is the Augustinian doctrine of the lesser evil, developed by Thomas Aquinas and others. God, the doctrine says, may choose to allow some bad things so that some good things may be saved and a greater evil averted. An analogy has been drawn with the church's decision in the Middle Ages to allow cremation, historically prohibited as an offence against the dogma of the resurrection of the body, in times of plague. Conservatives poo-poo the comparison. Cardinal O'Connor, who knows the thin end of a wedge when he sees one, is not going to open any door to relativistic doctrines of lesser and greater evil in the archdiocese of New York.



O'Connor objects

Bishops withdraw AIDS document

From Sean Cronin,
in Washington

AMERICA'S Catholic bishops in a rare move have withdrawn their paper, issued on December 10th, giving qualified approval for teaching about condoms in hospitals and schools controlled by the Church in order to combat AIDS.

Cardinal John O'Connor of New York and other conservative prelates had objected to the paper.

No one could recall a similar change of policy so quickly by the Catholic bishops of America. Withdrawal of the paper, titled "The Many Faces of AIDS: A Gospel Response," by the Administrative Board of the US Catholic Conference of Bishops was accompanied by a letter dated December 17th, from Archbishop John May, of St Louis, chairman of the council. It says: "I am sure that all of us are pained by the public reception of

the document. It is clear to me that the administrative board's statement needs to be discussed in greater depth by the membership".

The issue will be on the agenda of a meeting of Catholic bishops to be held in Minnesota next June 24th-27th, Archbishop May's letter stated.

Cardinal O'Connor was in Rome when the administrative board issued the document. On his return he publicly declared that it was "a very grave mistake" and he would not circulate it in the archdiocese of New York or put its recommendations into effect in the schools and hospitals under his control.

The withdrawal of the document represents a defeat for the liberal wing of the Catholic bishops, headed by Cardinal Joseph Bernadin of Chicago, who chaired the task force that drafted it.

Another case of AIDS in Eire

Another case of AIDS was confirmed in Dublin yesterday, bringing to 15 the number of patients in Eire with the fully developed disease.

A total of 535 have been confirmed as having the AIDS antibodies. It is not known how many of them will develop the full illness.

Two of the 15 are haemophiliacs who were treated with American blood products. The other patients are male homosexuals.

Meanwhile, a campaign to eliminate the fear of AIDS in the workplace was launched in Northern Ireland yesterday.

Anxious to calm public concern over the spread of the deadly virus, the Government has released a new booklet, AIDS and Employment.

Stressing that employees are not at risk from the disease, the pamphlet says: "Person to person transmission of the AIDS virus does not occur during normal working activities."

The booklet answers the main questions about employment aspects of AIDS and provides general guidance on legal obligations. It covers recruitment of an infected person, an employee's rights if dismissed and the situation where other employees

refuse to work with an infected person.

The booklet is being sent to more than 30,000 workplaces in the Province, but additional copies are available by writing to AIDS and Employment, Industrial Relations Branch, Department of Economic Development, Arches Centre, 13 Bloomfield Avenue, Belfast BT5 5HD.

● A teacher who feared she contracted AIDS when she picked up a syringe at her school jumped out a fourth-floor apartment window in Rome yesterday, the third suicide this month in Italy blamed on dread of the fatal disease, newspapers reported.