

NOVA Airs AIDS History

Fighting for Our Lives

Imagine being struck down with a disease so new it has no name, so deadly it will kill more than 2,000 people in its first four years, so baffling it is being called the "disease of the century."

Is this the plot for a new science fiction film? Unfortunately not. This scenario is grounded in real life. Doctors now have named this ailment "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" or AIDS.

How modern science has been unraveling the mystery of the disease was the subject of NOVA's "AIDS: Chapter One," which aired Feb. 12 on PBS television.

The program took viewers back to 1981, when the first ominous clues appeared. Doctors in Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco were reporting a highly unusual pneumonia and a rare form of skin cancer in otherwise healthy, young gay men. Although the two diseases are vastly different from one another, a pattern emerged. Both were signs of breakdown in the body's immune system. What was happening?

NOVA then picked up the trail in

Atlanta, where the job of fitting together the early pieces of the puzzle fell to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), whose elite corps of epidemiologists investigate the causes and control of epidemics. NOVA talked to the medical detectives at the CDC who sifted through the evidence, searching for the who, what, when and where of the deadly ailment.

The hunt for the "why" of AIDS made up the rest of NOVA's modern-day detective story. The chase intensified when two laboratories, one in Bethesda, MD, and the other in France, closed in simultaneously on the lethal culprit.

All this was played out against a very human backdrop--the ongoing struggle of people who were fighting for their lives. NOVA talked with people with AIDS and their doctors as they watched for signs that treatment methods would be found.

NOVA, the award-winning weekly science documentary series, is produced for PBS by WGBH in Boston and is made possible by grants from public television stations, the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies, and Allied Corporation.

Cruise to Benefit AIDS

St. Claire Travel of San Jose, CA is offering people a chance to take a popular vacation cruise and at the same time make a donation to a worthwhile cause.

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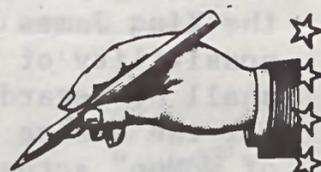
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