

AIDS: The Real Story

By PAUL MARTINI

When AIDS (ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME) first appeared in homosexual men in 1981, there was very little medical worry or public hysteria. But a disease that has mounted to an alarming 14,000 cases in the U.S. alone in four short years is cause for panic. And this new panic has led the headlines of many European publications to proclaim the disease's spreadings with the warnings of a new plague.

The shocking thing about AIDS is that the disease is as little understood by the public as it is baffling to researchers. According to doctors at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, the disease is not worth the comparison to the plagues of the middle ages, but it was acknowledged that a cure was several years away. The group

was optimistic in hopefully slowing down the spread of AIDS through government and private information programs, especially aimed at male homosexuals.

Male homosexuals represent 73% of those identified as having the disease and homosexual intercourse is by far the leading means of transmission, but heterosexual intercourse has just recently been found to transfer the virus. This contributes to the fear and panic. Health experts say that the speed at which the virus travels among sexually active heterosexuals will determine how fast the disease will spread, and whether or not it will explode into a giant worldwide epidemic.

According to many medical experts, only a fraction of the potential cases of AIDS has surfaced. Another scary thing

about AIDS is that the time between getting the infection and getting the actual disease itself ranges from 6 months minimum to as long as 5 years. Therefore, the disease can spread very widely before many of the infected people know they are victims. So many of the countries with low AIDS disease rates are expecting a large amount of future cases. Some medical experts in Canada, which has about 400 known cases, fear the number of virus carriers will swell to about 25,000 to 100,000 by the end of the decade.

AIDS appears to have originated in Central Africa, and it is thought to have spread through Europe, Asia, and finally to the U.S. Many health experts have concluded that AIDS found its way to the U.S. by either blood transfusions, traveling homosexuals, or U.S.

military personnel visiting gay bars and bathhouses in Germany. For unknown reasons, the U.S. has experienced thousands of cases while in the rest of the world AIDS seems quite rare. The U.S. has ranked number 1, with over 14,000 cases, while Brazil ranks a very distant second with 483 cases. But many world health experts fear that countries with low numbers of AIDS cases will find the disease rapidly increasing soon. 7,157 deaths have been attributed to AIDS in the U.S. alone, but because several African countries, as well as Communist Bloc countries, have not released statistics concerning the disease, it is not known exactly how many people have died worldwide.

AIDS is a disease that rapidly destroys cells of the immune system with the

greatest reproduction rate of any known virus. According to recent findings, AIDS is more than on virus. The 1st documented case of AIDS attacked and destroyed the immune system, leaving the victim prey to all sorts of infections and sickness. Many doctors and researchers now say that the disease can attack the central nervous system, affecting one's sight, speech, memory, and ability to walk. Recent information shows that in some cases, the AIDS virus has directly attacked the spinal cord and brain. AIDS victims are also very susceptible to rare cancers and various infections that are ultimately fatal. Another frightening thing about AIDS is that it produces many genetic variations that hinder the development of an effective vaccine. Because of this, many health experts believe it will be several years before a cure is found.

Young Boy Pays The Price

By DALLAS BRITT

Recently NEWSWEEK released an article about Ryan White. Ryan White, 13, is an honor student at Western Middle School near Kokoma Indiana. What's so important about that? Ryan does not go to the school a single day of the week. Ryans classroom is located at a desk in his bedroom and his teacher along with classmates are nothing but low voices on a desk telephone. Young Ryan has AIDS.

Ryan acquired AIDS through a blood transfusion. Even though the Indiana State Health Officials say that a student with AIDS can go to school like other students as long as their condition does not threaten others.. District Superintendent of Schools, J.O. Smith restricted Ryan from school which he was to attend with his friends. Superintendent Smith called AIDS, "the most scary of all

communicable diseases." Because of Ryans restriction his parents have taken the school officials to Court to sue on grounds of discrimination.

There are more and more cases turning up of school children with AIDS. Through all of the confusion very few people listen to the fact that as of September 9, 1985 only 183 people under the age of 18 have been diagnosed as having AIDS. This amount was found

in 23 states in the country.

In states such as Florida, Indiana, and Connecticut the courts have issued guidelines allowing children with AIDS to continue going to school, but very few are actually seeing a classroom. The same policy has yet to be enforced in the city of Los Angeles.

The fear by some parents that their children might contract AIDS from a classmate is understandable, but the Center

for Disease Control in Atlanta has ruled that casual person-to-person contact, as would happen within the confines of the school among the students, appears to pose no risk and that most of the children should be allowed to attend their school. Says Stanford Law School Professor Robert Mookin, "I'm concerned that school boards are acting out of fear and prejudice rather than rational concerns for the welfare of children."

AIDS: The Myths

By MARION PEACE

Once thought to be confined to homosexuals, intravenous drug users, hemophiliacs and Haitians in the United States, AIDS is now recognized as a worldwide problem with cases diagnosed on almost every continent," says Dr. James Curran, head of the AIDS task force at the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. The belief that AIDS is a disease of homosexuals only and other myths that have arisen out of fear and ignorance have prompted experts to discuss at length the method of transmission to dispel such myths. The response to some of the more common misconceptions is as follows:

1. Is AIDS a disease of gays? The answer is no. While 73% of AIDS victims are homosexuals, the disease does strike

heterosexuals. In Kinshasa, Zaire four cases of AIDS are diagnosed every day, most of which involve heterosexuals.. Doctors cite such things as poor sanitation, use of unsterilized needles, and blatant promiscuity for this disproportionate ratio. Closer to home at the U.S. Army's Walter Reed Hospital, four out of ten AIDS patients appear to have contracted it from heterosexual activity. Dr. Robert Redford of Walter Reed says "as time goes by, it will be more evident that this is a sexually transmitted disease that is not limited to one sexual practice." White House Staffer Patrick J. Buchanan who said in 1983, "The poor homosexuals, they have declared a war on nature, and now nature is exacting an awful retribution," and others who saw AIDS as divine

retribution can no longer consider it a plague exclusively of gays. Some experts believe that a many as 270,000 heterosexuals in the U.S. today may be AIDS carriers. The

belief that homosexuals with only one or fewer partners do not get AIDS is also false. It is possible to get AIDS from only one partner, and each exposure increases the risk.

2. Can AIDS be contracted from casual contact?

AIDS is a virus spread through sexual contact or contact with infected blood.

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