

# Common thread links AIDS sufferers

by Dwight D. Sharpless

Since the first case of Acquired Immune Deficiency was reported in the Carolinas in 1982, the number of victims has mushroomed to 85 with 37 more suspected. About a third of North Carolina's 100 counties and almost a fourth of South Carolina's 46 counties have reported at least one case. Since Mecklenburg County saw its first case in March 1984, about 15 patients have been treated there, including 8 county residents. Local hospitals have treated some AIDS patients.

The number of deaths continue to mount. By 1985, 6,212 persons in the United States had died of AIDS. Compared with killer diseases of the past, AIDS's death toll is tiny. The Bubonic Plague of 1918 and 1919 killed 20 million. The Spanish Influenza of 1918 and 1919 killed 20 million.

AIDS will probably not reach such epic proportions. Still it breeds fear by its nature. It has no cure and is almost always deadly. In two years researchers predict the United States will have over 50,000 cases and in five years perhaps 100,000.

Many experts believe the virus was first passed to humans in the 1960's, or earlier, by the African green monkey in Central Africa, perhaps through a bite.

Though the first case in the United States appeared in 1978 the first in the Carolina was nearly 5 years later.

The symptoms of AIDS fall into two categories. They may be due to a specific disease that is an expression of AIDS, such as the cough of Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia, or they may reflect the underlying illness, such as the lymph node swelling seen in many AIDS patients. The symptoms explained here are ones that should prompt medical attention. With the possibility that early treatment will improve the outcome, it is better to consult a doctor for what may turn out to be a minor problem than to worry in private, waiting for the problem to go away.

Lymph nodes are found behind the ears and in the neck under the chin, but some also exist deep inside the body and cannot be detected in a physical examination. Significant lymph-node swelling, the type that has been found in AIDS patients, is defined as swelling which has lasted for more than three months and affects nodes in at least two areas of the body, including the groin. This sort of swelling can be caused by many things including common infections and reaction to drugs. Anyone who finds lumps on his body should consult a doctor.

PCP is a relatively new disease in the United State. The first case was reported in 1955. Until the recent outbreak of PCP in AIDS pa-

tients, this infection has not been seen in people thought to have normal immune systems. The appearance of PCP was the tip-off that a profound alteration of the body's immune function was the basis of AIDS.

Before patients develop the specific symptoms of PCP, they often have non-specific complaints; fever, fatigue and weight loss. These are followed by the classic symptoms of PCP: shortness of breath and a cough that is either dry or produces small amounts of white sputum. Some patients also have sharp chest pains when they inhale deeply. Pneumocystis enters the body through the lungs, but it is not clear how patients with lowered immune defenses become sick from it. It is not known whether they have caught a new infection or whether the infection has been lying dormant in the body and now runs rampant because their defenses are down.

Even though test results indicate that AIDS is contagious, there is no evidence to conclude that casual contact, such as hugging, can spread the disease. There is also no evidence to suggest that AIDS can be spread through the air, by sneezing or coughing. Even though it can be spread through sexual contact, many sexual partners of AIDS patients have not come down with the disease. Given the risks involved though, people should

make every effort to protect themselves and others.

Because the disease is new, its causes uncertain and its manifestations varied, AIDS is difficult to define and describe. Studies show that roughly 72 percent of AIDS patients are gay men who live in large suburban centers. Forty-five percent of AIDS patients live in New York City; 12 percent in San Francisco and 6 percent in Los Angeles. Miami, Newark and Houston are also reporting a significant number of cases.

While gay men accounted for the early reported cases, new groups have been steadily added to the list. Heterosexual men and women who use intravenous drugs now account for 17 percent of AIDS cases. The Center for Disease Control reported in 1982 that 34 Haitians, none of whom was gay, and only one of whom used intravenous drugs, became the third group of people to get AIDS.

Despite the diversity of people who got AIDS, there was a common thread. The link was that hepatitis B was also prevalent in those groups at greatest risk from AIDS. Both hepatitis B, which is caused by a virus, and AIDS were probably transmitted in the same ways: by sexual contact, contaminated needles, and blood transfusions and both diseases were likely to have a similar cause: a virus.

## Your Horoscope

by Edith Taylor

**Taurus: April 20 - May 20**  
Be on your best behavior at this time. Try not to get involved in something you can't handle. In other words, use your head and don't make hasty decisions.

**Cancer: June 22 - July 22**  
Your emotions may get a little stirred up, but grab a hold of yourself. Life is confusing, but can be easily dealt with if you keep yourself together. Money problems are few this time.

**Gemini: May 21 - June 21**  
Some financial situations may need to be dealt with, but they aren't too serious that they can't be handled. Your love life will become pleasurable and most enduring.

**Leo: July 23 - Aug. 22**  
You will be unbearable to live with at this time, but you'll grow out of it. You will also find that life is full of pleasures. So go out and enjoy yourself.

**Virgo: Aug. 23 - Sept. 23**  
This month is a time of relaxation for you. Take it easy and enjoy all things that come by. Watch out for anything that seems unreal!

**Libra: July 23 - Aug 22**  
A surprise will come about this month. A new love life which you have longed for will come into existence. Take it slow and cherish the fun moments that you will share. It could be worth the wait.

**Scorpio: Oct. 24 - Nov. 22**  
Your financial situations will all become easy to handle now. Your love life will continue to grow stronger, so do not hesitate to enjoy it to the fullest.

**Sagittarius: Nov. 23 - Dec. 21**  
A friend may try to get into your personal business but find a way to politely tell him to stay out! If you have a problem, try to deal with it on your own.

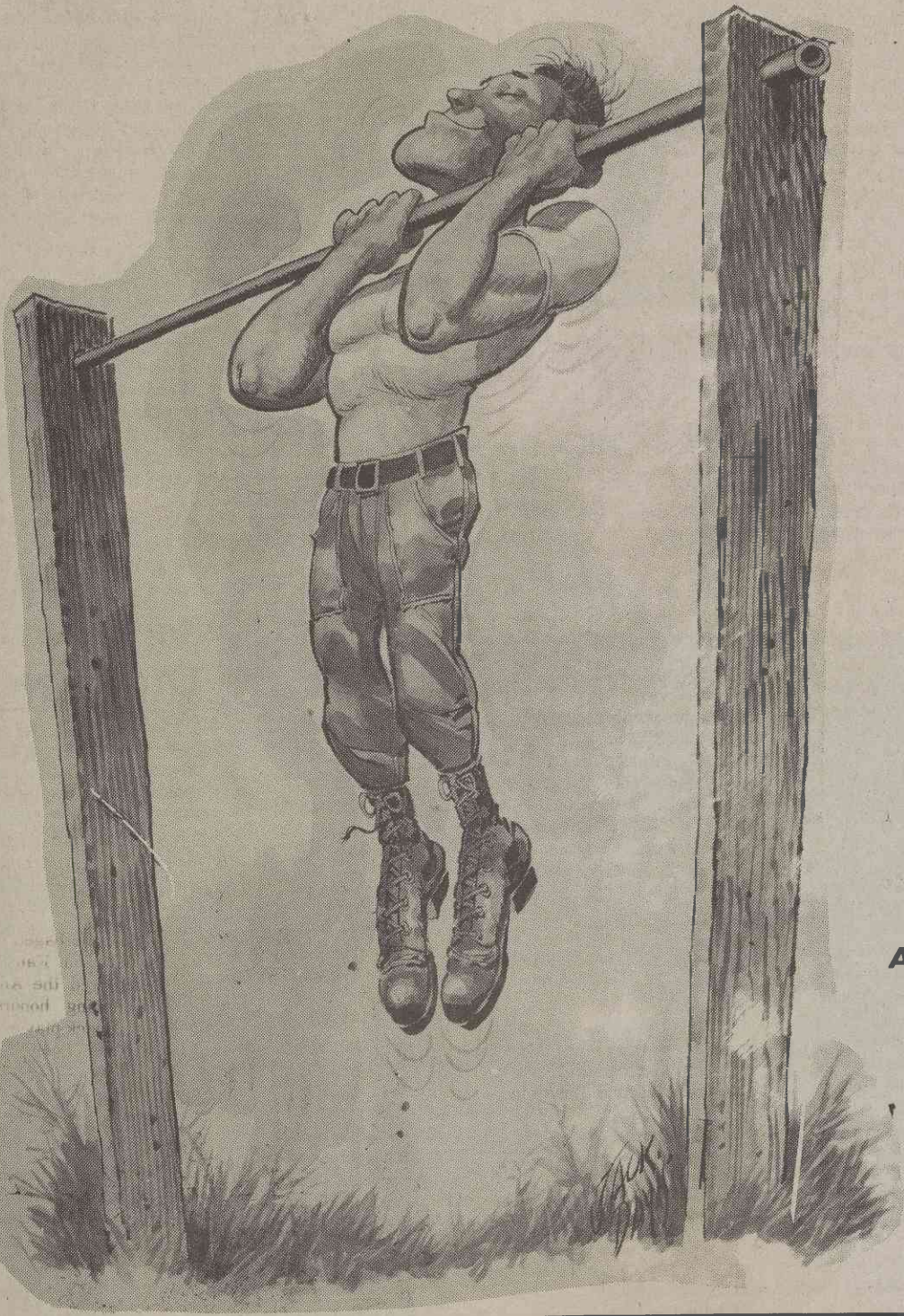
**Capricorn: Dec. 22 - Jan. 20**  
Encourage a friend to get his act together. Tell him life is short but full of goodness if he makes it that way. Take some of the money that you have been saving and buy something you have been wanting for a long time.

**Aquarius: Jan. 21 - Feb 19**  
Get ready to deal with a problem that will rise right out of the blue! It is going to seem tough, but always remember that every dark cloud has a silver lining. You could come out of this on top if you do the right thing.

**Pisces: Feb. 20 - March 20**  
It is time to make an important decision on your future. Don't delay on the making of this decision, for it may be to your advantage.

**Aries: March 21 - April 19**  
Spring is here and life is full of surprises for you. Love is in the air, but it is up to you to make that move.

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