

# CHILD WATCH

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

## MORE THAN A MEDICAL CHALLENGE

Danielle has AIDS, is fighting for her life, and is only 2½ years old. She recovered from a bout of pneumonia, but still has trouble gaining weight. She receives medication five times a day and takes liquid food supplements through a tube in her nose.

She acquired the virus from her parents, both of whom have histories of drug addiction and have tested positive for HIV. Danielle is one of an estimated 2,000 children (younger than 12) suffering from AIDS. Women and children are the fastest growing population infected with AIDS. What is startling is the disproportionate number of black children afflicted with the disease. They account for 52 percent of reported pediatric AIDS cases.

Although the effects of HIV are hard to predict, Danielle receives good quality medical treatment, thanks to a unique clinic.

The Special Immunology Family Clinic at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia treats HIV-infected children and addresses the whole family's health and social service needs. Every family is assigned a case worker, who manages their care. With help from the family's case worker, Danielle's parents can arrange for drug rehabilitation for themselves, food supplements for their daughter through the Women, Infants and Children and other programs, a home aide from a local AIDS support group to take care of Danielle, and transportation to and from their next appointment—all during the same visit.

There's a growing recognition that one-stop family care similar to that at CHOP is critical for families affected by HIV. Since the majority of such families are poor, and many are headed by only one parent, all the daily challenges facing any family with chronically ill children are multiplied. In addition, since transmission from parents is the most common way children acquire HIV, parents may be too sick themselves to care for their children, or several children may be ill at the same time.

Despite all the obstacles, many families manage on their own to get the care and services their children need. "The strength these families have to overcome many, many barriers to get care for their children continues to amaze me," says CHOP social worker Vicki Ellis. Even so, comprehensive, coordinated services help make sure that the care is consistent. In Danielle's case, says Ellis, "I think the child probably would not have gotten to medical appointments, except maybe in acute emergencies. The family has too many other issues to deal with."

Ultimately, coordinated services for families affected by the disease is only part of a full response to pediatric AIDS. There is a host of other urgent issues to deal with: HIV prevention, pediatric AIDS research, gaps in health insurance coverage, public ignorance and discrimination against people with HIV, and the need for specialized foster care and family preservation.

No one knows better than the families themselves how much remains to be done. Ask anyone who works with them. "What do they wish for?" says Ellis. "People to understand HIV, people to talk about it like cancer, or heart disease or any other serious illness. They want people to understand that everyone's at risk. They want greater access to care. They want a cure."

To learn more about coordinated, comprehensive services for children and families with HIV, contact the Association for the Care of Children's Health, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 300, Bethesda, Md. 20814. (301) 654-8549.

# Helpful Hints On House Hunting

Are you a wall knocker? That's something like a tire kicker, except instead of trying to buy a sound car, you're searching for a quality house. Fortunately, there are a lot of easier ways to know if the house you're considering is of good quality. Here, from the experts at Moen, manufacturer of faucet systems known for quality and engineering, are some of the things you should watch for:

• When checking the basement, look for stains on the walls and floors. If the basement is newly painted, sniff along the walls for moist odors.

• Watch for large cracks, a quarter of an inch wide or more. Fine cracks are usually the result of normal settlement, but bigger ones mean trouble.

• Check for slopes in floors, slanting walls or sagging rooflines, uneven door frames, bad cracks in the plaster, windows out of plumb. In a newly built house a twisted frame may show up only in a small slant here and there, but it means costly repairs over time.

• Check the attic. Here's where the thickness of insulation shows. If there's three inches or less, your heating and cooling systems won't do the job they should, so you'll probably want to add more.

• Turn on the faucets to check the pressure, and look for rust in the water. Also check the quality of the faucet systems. If a contractor is paying attention to quality, it will show in the bathrooms and kitchen accessories. Finding a Concentrix faucet system, for example, is a good sign other fixtures in the house will



Before buying your house, take a look at the faucets and check the pressure. Low pressure or rusty pipes could be costly to fix.

be reliable and stylish.

• Check the heating system. If the pipes and boilers look old, they are, and may need replacing soon. The average life of a hot-air furnace is twenty years; a cast-iron boiler, forty to fifty years; a steel boiler, fifteen to twenty years.

• Check the drainage. All grades must slope away from the house, or you're inviting a water problem.

Your own inspection can root out the obvious bad guys, but it's no substitute for a final inspection by an engineer before you sign the contract.

FACTS FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH:

## Medicine for the Public

### Early Treatment Prolongs Life for People with HIV

People infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) who receive early treatment can greatly improve the quality and length of their lives, experts agree. They can delay the onset of AIDS and may do well long after those who ignored their health have serious illnesses or early death. When people first acquire HIV, they often feel healthy and are unaware that they have been infected until they have a blood test.

When patients are first diagnosed with HIV, doctors begin monitoring their ability to ward off infections. If HIV patients who have not developed symptoms begin taking anti-retroviral drugs such as azidothymidine (AZT) when their white blood cell count drops, they can delay the onset of AIDS complications. HIV-infected people also need counseling and information so they can take precautions against spreading the virus.

For a list of Medicine for the Public booklets, fact sheets and videotapes, write: Clinical Center Communications, National Institutes of Health, Building 10, Room IC255, Bethesda, MD 20892.

## newsworthy trends

### Money: More Safety, Less Cost

Here's an ingenious program that saves time and money spent paying pensions and annuities: direct deposit. With direct deposit, those who pay out pensions and annuities save money. Those who receive them save time. Both have greater safety.

Those benefits are all the result of Direct Deposit of pensions and annuities, something nearly one out of every eight American companies already offers, and many more are considering. With Direct Deposit, pension and annuity payments go right into the recipient's bank account.

Most companies save 50 cents or more on every pension and annuity payment sent out through Direct Deposit—money saved by streamlining payment operations through reduced administrative, banking, mailing and check processing costs. That could save a company thousands—sometimes hundreds of thousands—of dollars over the course of a year!

At the same time, Direct Deposit offers retired employees a safe, convenient, reliable way to receive payment—no worries about checks getting lost or stolen and no extra trips to the bank, because the money's already there.

If your company offers Direct Deposit of payroll, and processes retire-



Direct Deposit of pensions and annuities can save companies thousands of dollars a year—and bring peace of mind to many retirees.

ment benefits through its payroll department, you're already on-line to start offering Direct Deposit for pensions and annuities. If retirement payments are disbursed through another department in your company, implementing a Direct Deposit program for pensions and annuities is still easy. Just as with payroll, local financial institutions can help you set up your program for Direct Deposit of pensions and annuities.

You can learn more about Direct Deposit and what it can do for you by sending 50¢ to: Dept., 432X, Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Co 81009.

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