

## Setting Priorities

Though women are at the center of the growing HIV epidemic, the national and international response to this major health issues is weak and inadequate. For women, mothers and children, large gaps exist between need — medical psychological and welfare — and services or support to meet those needs. Nor is sufficient effort directed towards policy development. Policies on HIV-infected pregnant women, for example, do not generally take into account reproduction rights. Screening policies are discussed without considering the capacity of the prenatal care system. Economic factors are rarely considered while discussing prostitution. Most importantly, women are rarely involved in the formulation of AIDS policies. As in most other health and social issues, policies of AIDS are “made by men - for men”.

## PEOPLE WITH HIV/AIDS HAVE RIGHTS, TOO

Source: TODAY May 11, 1995

The Manila based organization REACHOUT AIDS Education Foundation, an AIDS service organization that advocates non-discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS, recently released its new poster that focuses on the basic human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.

The following are the rights reflected in the information, education and communication materials: the right to confidentiality, the right to disclosure, the right to counseling, and the right to social-support services.

The person with HIV/AIDS has the right to the assurance of confidentiality on all information pertinent to their health status and health behavior. It is the person's discretion to disclose their HIV status to whoever, whenever and wherever they please. The individual's wish for privacy should be respected.

Also, a person with HIV/AIDS has the right to be provided with

access to correct, accurate and unbiased information which will guide in making informed choices. The individual has the sole right to decide on the alternatives most beneficial in relation to their sexual behavior, health practices and family life. People with HIV/AIDS have the right to avail of basic health-care services. They should not be deprived of their right to social services, insurance services, spiritual guidance and legal aid.

The intent of this communications effort is to enlighten people about the social implications of the disease and at the same time replace irrational fear, existing biases and prejudices with a deeper sense of humanity, compassion and understanding. The Reach Out office in Manila can be contacted at 632- 895-1369.

## PREGNANCY RELATED HORMONE USED TO TREAT AIDS PATIENTS

Source: TODAY May 11, 1995.

Hormone produced during pregnancy could become the newest treatment for Kaposi's sarcoma, the most common cancer in AIDS patients, according to a new study.

The report offers scientists a clue as to why men develop the cancer at a much higher rate than women, the study's author's said.

The research, published in the journal *Nature*, shows that human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), a hormone present in high levels during the first trimester of pregnancy, destroys Kaposi's sarcoma cells by binding to them.

In the study, newborn and adult mice were injected with Kaposi's sarcoma cells. All of the adult mice and the male newborns later developed tumors. But the four female newborn mice did not, and they remained tumor-free after they became pregnant.

The cancer cells also were injected into mice in early- and late stage pregnancy; those injected in the early stages of pregnancy did not develop tumors, and the late-stage

pregnant mice showed smaller tumors that did not spread.

“The hormone was not blocking, but killing Kaposi cells, and it doesn't kill normal counterpart cells. This is without apparent toxicity to the animals,” said Dr. Robert Gallo, chief of the National Cancer Institute's Tumor Cell Biology team and a coauthor of the study.

If further studies confirm the new report, the pregnancy hormone may be used to treat Kaposi's sarcoma, according to the government researcher.

Gallo speculated that the reason HIV-infected women have a low rate of Kaposi's sarcoma even if they are not pregnant is because one element of HCG is similar to a hormone released during the menstrual cycle.

Because HCG is not a feminizing hormone, it should not cause problems eventually used to treat men with Kaposi's sarcoma, Gallo said.

Kaposi's sarcoma tumors typically develop as purple blotches on the skin. Although the cancer is common among homosexual men who are infected with the AIDS virus, it rarely develops in uninfected people.

Treatment with HCG would ease the concern about the negative effects of strong cancer medications on patients with already weak immune systems, the Nevada researchers said.

## AIDS WOMEN TAKE RISK OF BEARING KIDS

Source: TODAY May 10, 1995

NEW YORK (NYT) - Sandy L. spent years in soul-searching discussions with her husband before they decided, out of love, to have a baby despite the risk. In Brooklyn, Monica Hernandez went through similar heartache, pregnant with a fifth child when so much about her future was uncertain.

These two women, the first a doctoral candidate with a good job, the second a homemaker who relies on welfare, share a