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fection owing to their biological condition as well as economic and social inequalities and culturally accepted gender roles which leave them in a subordinate position to men with respect to decisions concerning sexual relations, the report said.

"Women are not born vulnerable, but made vulnerable," Dubravka Simonovic, Chair of the CSW said.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is growing with alarming speed. Estimates indicate that by December 2000, 36.1 million people were living with HIV, up from 10 million in 1990. Ninety-five percent of those infected live in developing countries.

"Poverty is a major factor responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS, particularly among women who constitute the majority of the world's poor," Simonovic emphasised.

In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women now account for 55 percent of the total number of people living with the virus. By the end of 2000, an estimated 10.9 million men and 13.3 million women in Africa were living with HIV/AIDS, according to the Secretary-General's report.

Meanwhile, in Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific (UNESCAP) reports that more than 2.2 million women aged 15-49 are already living with HIV/AIDS.

Source: Inter Press Service, 16 March 2001

Happiness is a Powerful Medicine

WASHINGTON—Feeling happy and hopeful appears to be a powerful medicine in reducing the risk of stroke, researchers said. The link between depression and a heightened risk of stroke had already been established in several studies on the impact of psychological factors on stroke incidence.

But researchers at the University of Texas Medical Branch investigated the impact of positive emotions on the risk of suffering a stroke—the third leading cause of death in most developed countries, including the United States.

Their study, published in the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*, followed 2,478 people aged 65 and older for six years. The researchers found that the risk of stroke was significantly reduced in subjects scoring highly in emotional well-being—such as feelings of happiness and hopefulness—while risk increased for subjects who were depressed.

A stroke involves loss of brain functions caused by a loss of blood circulation in some areas of the brain.

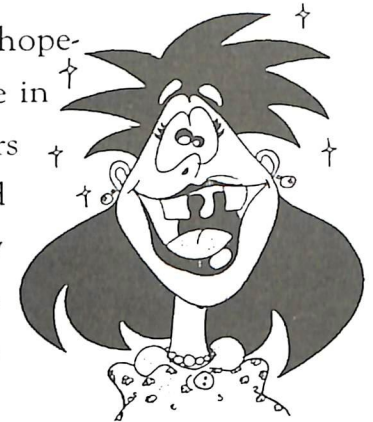
"Positive affect (emotion) is related to a number of characteristics known to improve health or

to protect against chronic disease," Glenn Ostir, who led the study, said in a statement. "Individuals who report high levels of positive affect may be more likely to exercise, to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to adhere to medical therapy."

Researchers said subjects who scored highly on questionnaires for emotional well-being had a stroke incidence that was one-third that of subjects who scored zero. They added that people scoring highly for depressive symptoms experienced only fractional increases in stroke incidence above those with little or no sign of negative affect.

The reduction in stroke risk associated with emotional well-being was more pronounced in men than women and in whites than blacks, the study found.

Source: Reuters, *Manila Bulletin* (Sunday Leisure), 25 March 2001



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