

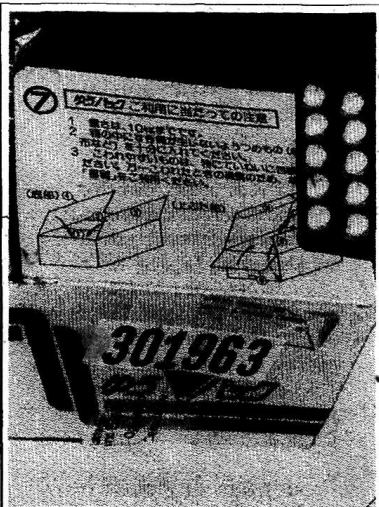
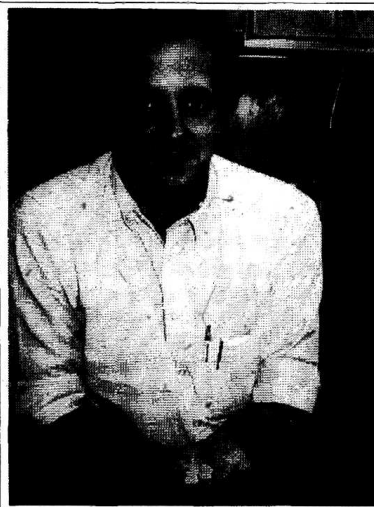
From Pentamidine to Dextran Sulphate

The Steering Committee of AAN! decided, at its meeting on January 10th, to phase out its highly successful Pentamidine Project. The Project, which has been going for nearly 9 months, has served PLWAs and HIV-positive individuals living in Toronto. It has been used as a model to develop similar programs in Halifax, Montréal, London, Windsor, and Vancouver.

The Project began in response to the placebo-controlled trials of Aerosolized Pentamidine (AP) conducted by the federal government and Fisons, the pharmaceutical manufacturer, in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. AAN! still opposes forcing people with HIV infection into trials of this sort as a way of getting the treatment they need. Because of the success of AP in preventing the onset of PCP pneumonia, AAN! undertook to make this treatment available to PLWAs who need it. Now a half dozen HIV doctors in Toronto are routinely administering AP to their AIDS patients. It is estimated that over 100 PLWAs in Toronto are taking AP as a preventative for PCP. To date the federal government's placebo-controlled trial of AP has only been able to enroll 75 experimental subjects.

The success of AAN!'s Pentamidine Project now means that apart from organizing a trip to Buffalo and getting the money to purchase the drug (not at all inconsiderable problems) people who need aerosolized pentamidine are able to get it. And both the PWA Foundation and the AIDS Support group at ACT are helping individuals solve the problems of money and transportation. In fact, if someone needs AP these are the organizations people in Toronto should now consult.

AAN! will be continuing to have the same phoneline number for people who want to get in touch: 591-8489. It will also continue to help make promising treatments available to HIV-positive individuals and



Pictured on the left is George Usher, from Scarborough's Polydex, showing five pills of Dextran Sulphate produced by his company. On the right, we see the Japanese version of Dextran Sulphate in front of the box which passed through Canada Customs. Photos by Michael Hulton

PLWAs. A new treatment that is attracting considerable attention in the United States and elsewhere is Dextran Sulphate (DS).

Dextran Sulphate is an experimental antiviral treatment for HIV infection. This substance has been sold over the counter in Japan for years as a blood thinning agent. Unlike AZT, DS is not anywhere near as toxic and has many fewer side effects.

The federal government is planning a nation-wide placebo-controlled trial of DS towards the end of 1989. Already, a number of people in Canada are importing DS for their own use. In the United States AIDS support groups have developed buyers clubs to purchase substances like DS in bulk for those who need them. In Canada, however, the Food and Drug Act makes

these kinds of bulk purchases illegal. Nonetheless, up to a three month supply of DS can be legally imported into this country by individuals for their own use.

AAN! is in the process of publishing a Dextran Sulphate bulletin to assist individuals who need this treatment to import DS for their own use. AAN! also very strongly recommends that individuals who want to use this treatment do so under the supervision of a physician. AAN!'s AIDS Update will continue to carry the latest medical-scientific information on the use of DS, including information of dosage, side effects, and similar topics of interest to users and to their doctors.

George Smith