



ROB CHAMPAGNE

Rubbing cocks together is safe sex

AIDS Update: Drugs and French AIDS plan

By Sean Hosein

More AIDS drugs

□ **Avarel and Avarone:** these are naturally occurring substances extracted from sea sponges and show potent anti-HIV activity in test tubes and when used in mice appeared to be low in toxicity.

□ **Castanospermine:** which occurs in the Australian chestnut, inhibits an enzyme essential to the production of HIV. Tests are underway at Harvard Medical School to see if it can be used with other anti-virals.

□ **Diethylcarbamazine citrate:** has been used to treat feline leukemia in cats, a disease which is similar to AIDS in that it is caused by a retrovirus and also causes immune-suppression. A researcher at the Harvard School of Public Health has suggested that it may be useful in the treatment of AIDS/ARC.

□ **2-deoxy-D-glucose:** protects cells in test tubes from being attacked by the virus by stopping the appearance of glyco-proteins on the envelope of the virus, which the virus then uses to attach itself to its target.

□ **D-Penicillamine:** suppresses the AIDS virus in people with ARC/PLS but has

serious side effects such as reducing the number of T-cells.

□ **Foscarnet:** developed in Sweden by Astra Pharmaceuticals, has been shown to be effective against HIV, CMV and herpes viruses. Side effects appear to be moderate and reversible. Its drawback is that it must be given intravenously.

□ **Imreg 1:** is an extract from healthy white blood cells which stopped the symptoms of AIDS/ARC from getting worse in approximately half of the people with AIDS/ARC in a 50 person study carried out by American and French scientists. New studies are planned.

□ **Imuthiol (DTC):** is an immune modulator (a substance which positively affects the immune system) manufactured by Institut Merieux, a French company, which has recently been tested in France in people with ARC/PLS. The results of the 4 month trial are the best of any drug recently tested: large increases occurred in the number of T-4-cells, new helper T-4-cells remained uninfected by the virus, almost half (18) of the people receiving the drug improved as compared with only 2 in the placebo group. New trials are underway in France, West Germany and the USA to determine the best dose, toxicity and other properties of the drug. The American government is not funding any of the trials which are taking place at six medical centres in the USA. "Guerilla clinics", which have been used to spread knowledge of obtaining, often illegal (not approved for use/sale) anti-AIDS drugs or even "recipes" for their homemade manufacture are being planned to alert persons with ARC/AIDS about this amazing drug. The manufacturer is more than willing to make it available for compassionate use but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) refuses to approve it, even on compassionate grounds.

□ **Nalteksone:** is currently used in Canada to help drug addicts keep off drugs. In people with ARC or AIDS who take a small dose before bedtime, it seems to improve their immune systems by producing the brain's own opiates which make people feel happy. It also reduces in some people the unnaturally high levels of alpha-interferon seen in ARC/AIDS. Persons responding favourably to the drug have a dramatically higher survival rate than non-responders.

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people exposed to the virus and who are healthy, will be given to people with AIDS. People who have encountered the virus yet remain healthy do so because their bodies produce massive quantities of "neutralizing" antibodies against the virus.

They also have antibodies against many of the infections to which persons with AIDS/ARC are susceptible. The plasma is first treated with heat and chemicals before being given to PWA's this ensures that any germs in the blood are killed. The study is being funded by an American company called Medicoorp. England's Medical Research Council did not fund the study ostensibly because it "was not well designed" and "lacked originality".

Paris

France, which has the largest number of people with AIDS in Europe has finally announced plans to stop the spread of the syndrome. There are approximately 1,632 cases of AIDS and estimated 150,000 carriers of antibodies to HIV in that country. The Health Minister, Ms Michele Barzach, has endorsed a four-point national campaign emphasizing prevention, care, research and international cooperation. She has also said that there will be no compulsory screening for HIV antibodies. Syringes will become obtainable without a prescription and condom manufacturers will be allowed to advertise their products without fear of legal action. A humorous side to the situation is that the clerical establishment has found itself in the unusual position of banning the condom as a means of birth control yet not discouraging its use as a means of preventing AIDS.

A new anti-viral drug called AL 721 is about to undergo clinical drug trials to see just how effective it may be. The drug will be given to between 300 and 400 men at testing sites worldwide including London, New York and Tel Aviv.

Analysis and opinion by Francois Lachance Sellout

ACT and the Toronto AIDS plan

The deal stinks: The AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) has endorsed a Toronto Department of Public Health proposal that can compromise grassroots organizing in Toronto and across the province in the decade to come (see news article in this issue). The plan put forward by the Medical Officer of Health: "reaffirms the principle that the protection of the public health takes priority over individual interests." It launches the city on a plan for the next 10 to 20 years. The cornerstone of the plan is the extension of the use of the controversial HIV test.

AL 721 was developed in Israel in the 1970's, where scientists used it to remove cholesterol from cell membranes. As cells age, more and more cholesterol builds up in the membranes, hardening them and impairing their function. Doctors at the Weizmann Institute in Israel, used the drug to improve the immune systems of elderly people because of its anti-cholesterol activity. Then in the beginning of this decade, when it found out about AL 721's antiviral properties, the institute sold the rights to the drug to an American company, Praxis pharmaceuticals.

AL 721 is thought to work by removing cholesterol from the envelope of the virus. Once this happens the virus is unable to infect cells. AL 721 is comprised of a mixture of three natural fats (lipids) made from chicken egg yolks.

AL stands for active lipid and the 721 stands for the ratio (7:2:1) of the three different fats which comprise the drug. It is relatively non-toxic and looks like a "yellow oily liquid." Recipes for crude home made substances similar to AL 721 have appeared in American gay publications. It may be spread on bread or mixed with orange juice. Preliminary tests carried out in Israel on a group of 28 people with AIDS have revealed the following results: the number of T-cells did not decline, and in some patients, even increased. Platelet count and body temperature readings returned to a more normal range. Most encouraging of all was the report that several of the people considered "terminal" at the beginning of the study were still alive 5 months later when it ended. AL 721 has not been approved for use in the U.S.A. because of bureaucratic delays in the FDA and alleged patent disputes in West Germany.

AIDS Update Credits: *AIDS Treatment News*, *The Lancet*, *Nature*, *New Scientist* and *Journal of Infectious Diseases*.

Repeatedly activists have warned that extending the use of the text beyond safeguarding blood banks is dangerous. It places the onus of prevention on those who test HIV positive and falsely reassures those who do not. It significantly shifts official efforts from popular sex education to social control.

Don't be fooled by the rhetoric. The rationale for advocating contact tracing is flimsy. The proposal claims that HIV positive reports contain a number of females, some of whom they have established were infected by heterosexual transmission. It does not state how many or what percentage of the cases this represents, nor does it back up its predictions of an increase with any statistical sources. Contact tracing does not serve to prevent the spread of HIV infection, it only monitors its spread. The female sexual partners of bisexual men are at risk. Only an unabashed public campaign challenging the "prophylactic/lover myth" (that reducing one's number of sexual partners prevents AIDS) will prevent the spread of AIDS. The majority of AIDS cases are still gay men and they are absent from any of the department's advertising. Contact tracing does not reach closet cases.

As well the department claims a backlog in HIV positive cases. Again it fails to say how big, leaving free reign to the plague mentality imaginations of city councillors, the decision makers and allocators of funds.

Innovative this proposal is not. It rests upon the reporting procedures for communicable diseases and the quarantine powers already accorded to Medical Officers of Health. In fact one goal set is to inform physicians of the existing law. If that is insufficient the plan includes a contingency for lobbying: "the Department of Public Health will advocate for modifications in existing legislation and/or creation of new legislation as need arises."

That is alarming since the plan seeks a general outcome that "all people who live or work in the City of Toronto know what HIV is, how it affects them, and how to prevent it in the context of healthy sexuality." Just what constitutes a healthy sexuality is nowhere defined.

The plan is a bid for a share in a growth with industry. The bulk of the sizeable new staff will carry out tasks already undertaken by other agencies. The only task that would not duplicate any existing services is HIV case follow-up and partner counselling! And the need for testing has not been assessed. Testing is unjustifiable.

The needs for epidemiological data and confidentiality are not incompatible. Instead of relying on reporting to health units, epidemiological studies that can be accomplished by following sets of subjects over a period of years could generate the data, ensure confidentiality and as well provide sound scientific controls. However the record on funding such studies has been abysmal. It is evident that research teams do not have the same political clout in the administration of health care funding as do public health departments.

The public health department is jockeying for position and has designed a bid to hog valuable resources that will cut out grassroots groups. The report states that "These are gross costs and do not reflect other revenues



adopting safe-sex behaviour possessed a positive sense of gay identity and could see themselves at risk is no great surprise to gay militants. We have been claiming for years that *solidarity demystifies oppression*. Coming together is necessary for our survival and development. As Jeff Kirby, performance artist/author, states, it is honouring ourselves enough to care and not believe the lies.

Frankness has been hailed as the key to this ongoing public health concern. It must be coupled with trust. Creditability is the bottom line. The new professions may not shed their hangups fast enough. The gay radicals are pragmatic and they repeat very creatively the nitty-gritty.

Francois Lachance is actively gay in Toronto.

SAFE SEX RADIO MESSAGES

The Safe Sex Corps, a project of the Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes (CORPS), along with Utility Grade Records (of Mr. Tim fame), have produced and are distributing a number of safe sex blurbs for university radio stations. They have already been aired to considerable acclaim on Toronto's co-operative CKLN radio. The messages use explicit (they use the word fuck), sex-positive language and are a welcome addition to safe sex resources. If you wish to air these messages contact Danny at (416) 964-7902 or Chris at (416) 360-6036, or write to Box 274, 253 College St., Toronto, Ont., M5T 1R5 or call CORPS at (416) 964-0150.

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Researchers in London, England are experimenting with a novel treatment for AIDS. Blood plasma taken from

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