



August 1, 2005
Donald B. Crawford, President

THE STAND

AIDS

AMERICANS WHO HAVE CONTACTED HIV NOW NUMBER MORE THAN 1 MILLION!

Hear this! Blacks account for almost 50% of the 1 million Americans with HIV, according to federal data released on June 13. That horrendous fact indicates that the AIDS epidemic can be characterized as much by race as by sexual preference.

Doctor Ron Valdiserri, Deputy Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said:

“The HIV epidemic, initially most prominent among white gay men, has expanded to affect the wide range of populations, with African Americans now most severely impacted.”

That dastardly virus should be feared by all, but according to these statistics, especially by African Americans. Whites accounted for 34% of the HIV-positive population and Hispanics 17%. Numbers far to high, but nowhere near the proportional percentages for African Americans.

The number of Americans living with the HIV-virus has increased yearly since the year 2002, and sometimes dramatically, because of the role of new medications and drugs which have allowed people infected with the virus to live longer, sometimes much longer. Although there is no cure for AIDS, aggressive and challenging research continues, and each year, better treatment and medications are produced. They extend life and make it more tolerable for infected individuals, but there is still no cure.

Homosexual and bisexual men make up 45% of the total infected persons. It continues to be obvious that gay and lesbian sexual preferences spread the disease and account for much of the total infected population. It is absolutely essential, said Doctor Valdiserri that any and every high risk group be fully educated in prevention techniques and services and that individuals with lifestyles conducive to contacting and spreading the disease be tested on a regular basis. Prevention and testing are absolutely necessary to halt the spread of HIV.

AIDS is a killer. It destroys the immune system and it leaves its victims vulnerable to opportunistic infections and cancers. It has already killed some 600,000 Americans and at least 22 million persons worldwide, and perhaps many more about which the experts do

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not know. In spite of these staggering numbers, health experts have been warning of a possible resurgence of the AIDS epidemic which eased for awhile in the early 1990's after some potent anti-retroviral drugs were developed and successfully targeted the disease. Since then, however, the disease has shown signs of a major comeback among both bisexual and homosexual men and intravenous drug users. Those lifestyle choices more than anything else promote the contacting and spreading of the disease.

The world hopes and prays for a cure. The disease, now, is incredibly problematic, but because it is so enigmatic, it can change, regroup and in a certain form, can become resistant to drugs and treatment. It is virulent and powerful and it lays and wait for the unsuspecting or any who make unwise or high-risk lifestyle choices. We should love and comfort those who are infected by the HIV virus or have full blown AIDS, so says the Scripture. We should continue to hope, pray and work for a cure. We should also warn and educate all regarding this monster and we should test whenever possible to help those infected without knowing and prevent the unwitting spread of this horrendous epidemic. It is a brutal, horrific disease and may, somehow-someway it be extinguished in our lifetime.

DBC/dw