

# HEALTH BRIEFS

## CHRONIC EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE IMPACTS LEARNING

HOUSTON — Exposure to violence can hinder a child's ability to learn. "Children living with some chronic threat, domestic or community violence or physical abuse, continue to act fearful even when they are in school," said Dr. Bruce D. Perry, director of the CIVITAS Child Trauma Programs at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Constant exposure to an unpredictable, threatening environment causes the brain to repeatedly activate the brain systems that respond to threat or stress. Over time, fear becomes so ingrained that it becomes the child's normal state. The result is disastrous for children trying to learn. "No matter how hard they try to pay attention and do their work, this constant fear state impairs their ability to function and learn well. You cannot learn if you are constantly expecting a threat," said Perry, chief of child psychiatry at Texas Children's Hospital. Schools can help these children by encouraging membership in groups or sports teams.

## PATCH HELPS CONTROL CHRONIC LOW BACK PAIN

HOUSTON — A medicated patch offers a treatment option for people with chronic low back pain. The patch, which lasts 72 hours, delivers a continuous dose of fentanyl, a strong opioid therapy, through the skin and into the bloodstream. It is placed on a flat skin surface, such as the chest, back, side or upper arm. The treatment has already proven to be effective for chronic pain related to cancer. "The standard oral opioid medications have to be taken every four to six hours, so there are generally peaks and valleys in the level of medication within the system," said Dr. Richard Simpson, associate professor of neurosurgery at Baylor College of Medicine.

## INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE MAY BE OTHER PROBLEM

HOUSTON — Inflammatory bowel disease may be disguised as many other problems in children. "Growth failure is the most common problem associated with inflammatory bowel disease in children," said Dr. Kathleen Motil, at the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine. "Malnutrition is a major factor that contributes to growth retardation in children." Inflammatory bowel disease is a chronic illness of the gastrointestinal tract. There are two types: Crohn's disease, which affects the entire gastrointestinal tract and has no known cure, and ulcerative colitis, which affects the large bowel and can be cured by removing the colon. Victims suffer from frequent bouts with diarrhea, abdominal pain and rectal bleeding. The disease may also disguise itself as rheumatoid arthritis, liver disease, gall bladder disease or eye disease. "Nutritional therapy is a good way to improve growth in children with inflammatory bowel disease," Motil said.

## PARENTS: LEARN ABOUT

### CHRONIC DIARRHEA IN CHILDREN

HOUSTON — Many parents may not realize their children are suffering from chronic "non-specific" diarrhea. "A child suffering from this type of diarrhea will have loose stools for a long period of time, but otherwise is perfectly healthy," said Dr. Carlos Lifschitz, an associate of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "It usually strikes children at age 1 year and sometimes lasts until age 3." Chronic "non-specific" diarrhea is defined as any increase in the number of bowel movements per day and increase in the water content of the stool lasting more than 15 days. It's "non-specific" because it has no particular cause. Many times parents will give more liquids to children suffering with this type of diarrhea to prevent dehydration. However, more fluids equals more stools and you begin to create a vicious cycle.

## SHOW EDUCATES HISPANIC WOMEN ON BREAST CANCER

HOUSTON — A Spanish-language soap opera combined with an interactive computer program is being tested as a new way to educate low-income Hispanic women about breast cancer. The program requires viewers watching a soap-opera-like story on a computer monitor to select "yes" or "no" buttons when a character ponders whether or not to see her physician for a clinical breast exam and have a mammogram. The story's ending is affected by the viewer's decisions. Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston want to know if this approach is more effective with low-income Hispanic women than are traditional methods such as lecturing and handing out printed materials. "Many of the women we are trying to educate about breast cancer don't read, but they can listen to and watch our story," said Dr. Maria Jibaja, principal investigator for the study and a Baylor assistant professor of family and community medicine.

# HEALTH

## More soldiers needed in blacks' war on AIDS

By Marian Wright Edelman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

A little more than a year ago I joined with about 90 other people to talk about the AIDS crisis in the Black community at a conference sponsored by the Harvard AIDS Institute.

The conference's primary organizer, Mario Cooper, a remarkable and dynamic leader, is a member of the Harvard AIDS Institute board and also works with the National Minority AIDS Council and the Balm in Gilead organization. Mario is Black, HIV-positive and committed to stopping AIDS' rampant run through the black community.

The conference raised an alarm which is still being largely ignored: "AIDS has overtaken homicide as the number one killer of African-Americans aged 25 to 44,"

according to government reports.

It is estimated that half a million African-Americans are infected with HIV. One in five deaths among Black women 25 to 44, and one in three deaths among Black men in that age group, results from AIDS.

Yet another scary thought: It is estimated that by the year 2000 as many as 125,000 children in the United States will have been orphaned due to AIDS. Most of these children will be poor and Black.

The numbers of newly-reported AIDS cases are increasing for every group except White men. More than 10 million of the estimated 30.6 million adults infected with HIV worldwide are women, and 90 percent of women with HIV/AIDS have been infected through heterosexual

intercourse. Our infants are increasingly in jeopardy of being born HIV-positive.

What can we do?

A lot.

HIV-infected pregnant women can reduce the likelihood of transmitting the virus to their babies by two-thirds if they receive AZT during pregnancy.

Cooper suggested Black people, especially Black women, begin to value themselves more.

He said Black churches, businesses, community-based organizations, schools and journalists must join in a national emergency effort to better inform Black families about HIV/AIDS prevention, education, care, and treatment, and that elected officials become responsive to the Black community's plight with HIV/

AIDS.

Education is paramount. Cooper said parents can begin by asking their children what they've learned in school about HIV/AIDS. They can teach children about choices and consequences and about taking responsibility for decisions, and they can learn more about HIV/AIDS themselves.

Taking part in local events, such as AIDS walks or benefits, or watching movies about HIV/AIDS, like Magic Johnson's educational video, can also be helpful, Cooper said.

While teaching children about bad behavior, give them examples of positive activities and help them understand that discriminating against people with HIV/AIDS is wrong, and that it's okay to be friends with HIV-positive kids because HIV

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## Africanized bees discovered in Southern Nevada

Special to Sentinel-Voice

For years, Nevada Division of Agriculture scientists have been carefully monitoring the Colorado River Basin for signs of invasion by the aggressive Africanized honey bee. Recently, two swarms were discovered in the Laughlin area.

"When climatic conditions allow, Africanized honey bees are able to migrate northward. We have known for some time that it was only a matter of time before they arrived," said Paul Iverson, administrator of the Nevada Division of Agriculture, an agency of the Nevada Department of Business & Industry.

"The heavy rains and cooler weather brought by El Niño have increased the nectar- and pollen-producing plants, which may have allowed these bees to survive on their march north."

The Africanized bee is more aggressive than its common relative, the European honey bee. Unlike its docile cousin, the Africanized honey bee defends its hive more quickly and will pursue intruders greater distances. Most serious stinging incidents have involved animals; but, on rare occasions, humans have also been stung. Chance encounters with individual Africanized honey bees on blossoms pose no greater threat than an encounter with European honey bees.

Africanized bees have been inaccurately referred to as "killer bees." Even though mass stinging is terrifying and could be life threatening, it is rare. Common sense is the best defense for avoiding stings from all stinging insects — not just honey bees.

The Africanized honey bee

is virtually identical to the European. For identification purposes, Division of Agriculture staff must use a special 23-step computer program.

This hardy insect has the ability to survive in many different climates. Researchers

are still unsure how far north the Africanized honey bee will survive in the United States.

According to Iverson, the state has a plan to manage the Africanized bees in Nevada. As yet, no Africanized bees have been found in the Las Vegas Valley.

"We will move our traps further up the river basin and into the deserts surrounding Las Vegas. We're eventually going to find them, if they arrive," Iverson added.

"More importantly, we have a plan to deal with them, if they do."

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