

## HEALTH

## Washington plans to track AIDS virus

WASHINGTON (AP) — The nation's capital plans to develop an identification system for tracking the spread of the AIDS virus without compromising patient confidentiality.

"It's clear to me that we have an epidemic," Mayor Anthony A. Williams, said at a news conference.

AIDS is the leading cause of death among district residents between ages 25 and 44. According to the city's Department of Health, the rate of new human immunodeficiency virus

infections per 100,000 population was 186 in the district — more than nine times the national average.

"HIV infection is spreading to more and more of our young people as well as spreading very, very fiercely in our Latino community," Williams told AIDS activists at a nonprofit health clinic that serves primarily Hispanics.

The "unique identifier" system allows a public health agency to develop a database that includes, racial, ethnic, gender and geographical

information on each patient.

Doctors, hospitals and clinics would use coded information to designate each patient but their name would remain in the confidential records of individual health care providers.

Since 1994, Maryland and Texas have used a 12-digit number that includes portions of a person's Social Security number, date of birth and other digits to represent gender and race.

Although new HIV infections in the district are declining among gay men,

the rate of new infections continues to grow among young people, African-American women and heterosexuals. Officials hope to have a reporting system operating within a year.

Since 1997, the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has asked all states to conduct HIV tracking as an extension of their AIDS surveillance programs. Names tracking has provided more reliable data than coded methods because of incomplete coding info, according to the CDC.

## Fruits, vegetables good alternatives to fast food

Marilyn Johnson  
Kondwani

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The next time you are looking for a new taste treat, don't forget fresh vegetables and fruits.

The National Dietary Council recommends Americans eat at least five servings each day of fruits and vegetables. Summer means lower prices and an unlimited variety of fresh fruits and vegetables to

choose from.

Naturally loaded with vitamins, minerals and fiber, fresh fruits and vegetables are nature's remedy for almost every ailment.

While some health conditions restrict unlimited intake of fresh fruits and vegetables, many Americans find eating fresh fruits enjoyable.

They're tasty, low in calories and fat free.

Today's busy society

relies heavily on fast food, which is often loaded with fats, sugar and salt which can lead to or worsen obesity, depression and physical ailments.

Eating organically grown fruits and vegetables is becoming more and more popular. It is best to avoid canned vegetables since they have already lost much of their nutrients and taste due to the canning process and sitting on the shelf. If you

can't get fresh vegetables, frozen are second best.

Vitamins and food supplements can increase the effectiveness of the food you eat and decrease the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, diabetes and other serious diseases.

"It's About Your Health," wants to hear from you. Send questions and comments to 414 S. Craig Street #271, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15213.

### HEALTH FOCUS

## Planning steps key to managing asthma in school

James L. Phillips, M.D.  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Returning to school means reuniting with friends and, for some students, returning to indoor conditions that can trigger asthma attacks.

Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism, amounting to 10 million lost days per year.

Dr. Benjamin Interiano of the Baylor College of Medicine/Methodist Hospital Asthma Institute of Houston cautions parents that chalkboards, plants, dusty carpets, certain preservatives in school cafeteria food and chemicals used for art and science projects can often trigger an attack.

Viral infections, atmospheric conditions and emotional situations also can trigger asthma. Even exercise can cause an asthma attack if preventive measures are not taken.

However, asthma need not keep children from participating in physical education or team sports as long as parents, teachers and coaches are aware of the child's physical limitations.

Take the following steps to make sure asthma doesn't impact your child's school experience.

— Discuss your child's medication with teachers and the school nurse. Make sure the nurse has medication instructions from your physician.

— Provide the school with emergency numbers.

— Inform teachers of the asthma symptoms — wheezing, coughing, choking and shortness of breath.

— Arrange for medication to be available in the nurse's office.

— Ask teachers not to treat your child differently.

Since children can be reluctant to take medications, stress to your child the importance of suppressing attacks and seeing the school nurse when necessary.

It's important, especially for children, to learn how to control asthma symptoms and to be a full participant in school and other areas of life.

With good planning and proper management, your child can avoid asthma-related school absences.

## Editors: Heart bias study was misinterpreted

BOSTON (AP) — The editors of the *New England Journal of Medicine* say they "take responsibility" for media reports which greatly exaggerated conclusions in a study about possible gender and sex bias in heart care.

The study, published in the *Journal* on Feb. 25, reported what happened when doctors viewed taped interviews of actors describing their identical symptoms and were asked what treatment they would recommend.

It found that, in cases of equally sick patients, doctors were less likely to refer blacks and women than they were whites and men to have cardiac catheterization, a test used to diagnose heart disease.

Several news organizations, including the AP, interpreted the study to show that doctors were 40 percent less likely to order the tests for women and blacks than for men and whites.

However, a followup

published in the *Journal* recently concluded that the likelihood of women and blacks being referred for the tests was actually 7 percent less than for men and whites.

The followup, written by Dr. Lisa M. Schwartz and others from the VA Outcomes Group in White River Junction, Vt., said the misunderstanding resulted from the original study's use of an "odds ratio" to report the differences rather than a more commonly used "risk ratio."

The researchers calculated the odds in favor of blacks being offered the test and of whites being offered the test. Then they calculated the ratio of these two figures. The ratio of blacks' odds to whites' odds worked out to 0.6, as did the ratio of women's odds to men's.

The media interpreted this to mean that women and blacks were 40 percent less likely to be offered catheterization. But the true difference is much smaller.

## Sons of DES moms should pursue urologic exams

HOUSTON — Men born between 1938 and 1971 should have their urologist check for problems associated with a hormone given to many pregnant women during those years.

The hormone DES (diethylstilbestrol), given to prevent miscarriage, might cause cysts, testicular problems and cancer in some men.

"Research suggests that sons of DES mothers do not have as many problems as do daughters, but a checkup can confirm whether there's anything to be worried about and allow early treatment," said Dr. Larry Lipshultz, a urologist at Baylor College of Medicine and The Methodist Hospital.

Cysts on the epididymis, a tube where sperm are stored on the back of each testicle, are the most common abnormality in DES sons. These epididymal cysts, sacs of fluid, are non-cancerous growths that feel like small lumps.

"The cysts don't usually require treatment, but it's important that an ultrasound exam confirm that any lump in the scrotal sac is a cyst rather than a cancerous growth," Lipshultz said. Surgical removal of a cyst might be warranted if it is causing pain or gets so big that it obstructs the flow of sperm to the seminal vesicle.

Undescended testicles are another problem in some DES sons.

"If this problem wasn't corrected during infancy or childhood, the man has a higher risk of infertility and cancer," Lipshultz said. Men with one undescended testicle have fewer sperm in their semen. They also have a greater incidence of cancer in either testicle, but the risk is higher in the undescended one — even after the problem has been corrected.

Whether DES sons have a higher risk of prostate problems should become evident during the next decade, Lipshultz said. Most DES sons are just starting to reach their 50s, which is when prostate troubles often begin. Since the prostate is a hormone-dependent gland, and DES sons were exposed to large amounts of a synthetic hormone, researchers will be looking for evidence of a higher incidence of prostate cancer or benign prostatic hypertrophy (enlarged prostate) in DES sons.

More than 4 million pregnant women in the United States were given DES, mostly between 1938 and 1971. The hormone was intended to prevent miscarriage, but it was later determined to be ineffective.

In 1971, the Food and Drug Administration instructed physicians to stop prescribing DES to pregnant women because the hormone was found to cause a rare vaginal cancer in DES daughters.

Ongoing research is monitoring health problems of DES children.

### CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

### LEGAL NOTICES

LAS VEGAS CONVENTION AND VISITORS AUTHORITY  
INVITATION FOR BID — BID NUMBER: 00-409  
PURCHASE OR RENTAL OF 2500 EACH 8 FT. STEEL BARRICADES

Documents pertinent to this advertisement may be examined and obtained between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, at:

LAS VEGAS CONVENTION AND VISITORS AUTHORITY  
Purchasing Department Room 203A  
3150 Paradise Road • Las Vegas, NV 89109

Bid Opening: August 27, 1999, 10:00 a.m. at the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, Purchasing Conference Room, 3150 Paradise Road, Las Vegas, Nevada 89109.

Sealed written replies to this Invitation must be received by the Purchasing Department no later than 10:00 a.m., August 27, 1999, at the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority Central Purchasing Office, Second Floor, Room 203A. Proposals will be publicly opened and read aloud, immediately after the established closing time and date. Submittal by fax is not acceptable.

Note: This Invitation does not constitute an order for the goods or services specified. No bidder may withdraw his bid for a period of sixty (60) calendar days after the actual date of the bid opening.  
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