

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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## \$19 million grant to boost AIDS research

By Gail Javitt

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) has awarded the largest grant it has ever issued—\$19 million—to an institute at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center that will study the psychiatric aspects of AIDS.

The five-year grant will be used to establish the HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) Center for Clinical and Behavioral Sciences, which will be jointly administered by the Research Foundation for Mental Health and the New York State Psychiatric Institute, which is located at Columbia-Presbyterian.

According to the head of the new center, Principal Investigator Anke Ehrhardt, the HIV Center will take a broad, interdisciplinary approach in its research. Ehrhardt is a psychiatry professor at the University's College of Physicians and Surgeons at 168th Street.

Ehrhardt, who is also a research scientist at the Psychiatric Institute, said the psychiatric and social sciences will have a key role in the center's studies because of the psychological and social implications of the methods of transmission of AIDS, and the mental problems brought on by it.

The more than 90 scientists from

institutions including Presbyterian, St. Lukes/Roosevelt and Harlem Hospitals will study different populations of patients from the initial to final stages of the disease, Ehrhardt said.

“We are very glad that we have it [the \$19 million grant],” she said.

“The center is focused on prevention and education and [on] the study of the progress of the disease, [as well as] on women and children, so we hope we will add to the knowledge [about AIDS] on several levels.”

The money will also be used to develop educational materials and programs designed to prevent AIDS for adolescents and minorities. Among the groups the HIV Center will work with are the New York City schools, Gay Men’s Health Crisis and the Human Resources Administration.

According to Ehrhardt, NIMH solicited grant proposals from several AIDS research centers around the nation and the one at Columbia will be the only one funded.