

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXII, Number 141, 14 September 1987 — AIDS pamphlet marketed nationally [ARTICLE]

AIDS pamphlet marketed nationally

By Josh Gillette

Columbia AIDS experts who last year compiled a pamphlet to disseminate facts about the disease now have a chance to reach 60,000 more potential victims.

The Pocket Books division of Simon and Schuster publishing company has published two printings of **The Essential AIDS Fact Book**, prepared in cooperation with the Columbia University Health Service by Paul Douglas of the Columbia Gay Health Advocacy Project (GHAP) and Health Services social worker and GHAP advisor Laura Pinsky.

The 63 page book is an expanded version of the original 32 page pamphlet distributed by UHS last year. Fifty thousand copies of the book were printed last November. A recent second printing yielded 10,000 more copies, Pinsky said.

The pamphlet was created with the help of the adhoc committee on AIDS at UHS, but this group was not involved in the expansion to book form, according to Pinsky.

Topics covered in the book include transmission routes of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) that causes AIDS, ways to block those routes, and testing for the virus. The authors explicitly discuss those sexual practices most likely to allow the virus to travel and they advocate "safe sex" procedures.

Dr. Richard Carlson, director of Health Services said the information and recommendations in the book are sound and relevant.

He said Health Services will continue AIDS education this year by distributing the original pamphlet and by organizing educational forums for students, faculty and all

University employees.

University Health Educator Ann Williams will take the facts about AIDS to students in dormitory discussion groups, Carlson said.

Condoms, which have been shown to prevent the spread of the AIDS virus, will be readily available to men and women in UHS bathrooms, Carlson added.

"I'm in favor of condoms being very, very available," he said, "because it's, not foolproof, but a good way to protect against the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, of which there are a lot on campus."

Pinsky said she hopes to see Health Services expand its counseling services to high-incidence groups, specifically gay men.

"We did a lot," Pinsky said of past educational efforts, "but we could do more."

Toward that end, GHAP will host a symposium on November 17 tentatively titled, "Fighting AIDS: Strategies for Staying Healthy for People with HIV Infection." The event will feature a panel of eight to 10 of the most prominent AIDS researchers in New York City discussing how people already infected with HIV can avoid developing AIDS.

"It's going to be a very big deal, very exciting," Pinsky said.

She anticipated the conference, which is open to the public, to draw a very large crowd.

The book also tackles the controversial subject of testing for AIDS. The authors stress the importance of getting emotional support in preparation for accepting test results.

“There’s an assumption made that testing is what changes people’s behavior to adopt safe sex,” Pinsky said.

While in New York state only government agencies can require AIDS tests, Carlson said the UHS mental health division and GHAP facilities do have testing services for Columbia affiliates.

Carlson pointed to recent violence against people with AIDS in Florida as evidence of the acute need for education about how the sickness spreads. The more ignorant people are about risks involved with AIDS, the more they fear it, he said.

But while homosexuals and intravenous drug users are still the highest risk groups, Carlson said safe sex for heterosexuals is still an important topic.

“People are talking less about risk groups, more about risky behavior, because it [AIDS] is spreading among the heterosexual population,” he said.

He said that first-year students were recently interviewed by a New York television station about AIDS.

“I was very impressed that first year students were well informed and seemed very serious about it,” Carlson said.