

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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AIDS forum focuses on updating, expanding NYC health facilities

By Denise Brodey

Declaring AIDS, “one of the greatest health disasters of this century,” Columbia’s Center for American Culture Studies presented the first of a four part symposium series on the disease yesterday in Lewison Hall.

Three panel members, including New York City Commissioner of Health Stephen Joseph, Associate Professor of the History of Medicine at Harvard Medical Center Allan Brandt, and Associate Clinical Professor of Bioethics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Adjunct Professor at Barnard, John Arras, each spoke briefly on “AIDS: The Nature of the Disease.”

Symposium issues ranged from the most intellectual problems of the influence of language used to discuss AIDS, to the brass tacks of expanding and updating our current health care system.

Not even twenty-four hours prior to the first forum at Columbia, the New York City AIDS Task Force released its preliminary report calling for an urgent reform and expansion of the current health care system for AIDS victims in the metropolitan area.

“Our hospitals, clinics and social-service agencies are already strained to the limit and many HIV-infected persons are not receiving adequate care,” reported the New York Times

yesterday in an article about the Task Force report.

Joseph, chair of the New York City Planning Agency and a member of yesterday's panel, recognized that New York City is "in the midst of a profound shift to a point where minorities will bear the burden of this illness."

Joseph added that minorities are moving to boroughs, such as Brooklyn, which presently do not have adequate treatment facilities for AIDS.

Suggesting that the manner of thinking about AIDS is closely linked to solving the problem of proper care, Brandt called for a more "rational, compassionate, and humane," approach to the AIDS epidemic.

"If doctors, who have a monopoly on medicine refuse to treat patients because of risk, who will treat them?" asked Arras. "No one, no one is left," he concluded.

He added that the responsibility to treat HIV positive patients is said to be seriously declining amongst health care professionals today.

The Center for American Culture Studies will hold its second forum on October 20 at 4 p.m. in Lewisohn Hall with a panel of four experts discussing "AIDS in American Minority Communities."



WHO IS THIS PERSON?: Don't be embarrassed; his identity is a mystery to those of us at Spec too.