

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXV, Number 86, 21 February 1991 — Learn about AIDS first [\[ARTICLE\]](#)

Learn about AIDS first

To the Editor:

It has come to our attention that a publication on the Columbia campus recently disseminated inaccurate and dangerously misleading information concerning HIV infection and AIDS funding. We would like to take this opportunity to correct some of this misinformation.

The idea was postulated that money spent on AIDS is money taken away from research relating to other health concerns (as if there is some kind of even dollar-for-dollar exchange

rate). This is simply not true. In addition, anyone in the health profession will tell you that monies allocated for the study of any major life-threatening illness will reap data that benefit the entire medical community.

It is fallacious to imply that HIV infection is on the decline. AIDS is rampant in several Third World countries and in this country we're seeing an increasing number of cases in intravenous drug users and women. The money being spent on AIDS research now is an attempt to save money in the long run; the cost of caring for AIDS patients has the potential to bankrupt our health care system in the future. It is not sensible to fund AIDS research based on the number who have the disease now; AIDS has an impact beyond the individual. We need to continue to fight against HIV infection at the prevention stage rather than merely accepting the existence of the disease in its end stages, i.e. as AIDS. The aforementioned practice will result in public policy that will target money only for the treatment of affected individuals (by allocating funds only for those who we can count as ill right now), rather than spending money on educating the public about HIV infection. In other words,

we're looking at the long range social and economic danger AIDS poses--it is prudent to spend money on prevention programs now (and on following the occurrences of HIV infection soon after they happen) rather than waiting until the case load of those diagnosed as having full-blown AIDS grows larger. All of this will take money and effort, not turning away and proclaiming to be "fed up."

There are a multitude of issues we could address in regard to this topic but perhaps it is simpler to extend an open invitation to all to learn more about the issues surrounding AIDS: we urge you to drop in on the course that is being taught on AIDS education at Teachers College on Monday nights from 7:20-9:00 in Grace Dodge Hall (Room 545). For those of you who so incorrectly stated that an AIDS panic has been consciously constructed by gay organizations who "invented the myth that everyone was at high risk for contracting AIDS" to better secure funds for their own beleaguered community, we urge you to come to our class. Whether the statements in the Federalist were made in utter seriousness or jest is no matter; we encourage you to learn the facts about AIDS. AIDS affects us all.

**James R. Morgan, Co-chairperson,
Lesbians, Bisexuals, and Gays at Teachers
College**