

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXVI, Number 126, 25 November 1992 — Barnard may begin HIV testing
[ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

Barnard may begin HIV testing

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Contributing Writer

In response to student requests, Barnard College Health Services recently distributed a survey to all Barnard students asking them if they want the school to offer HIV testing.

Testing for HIV, the virus known to cause AIDS, is currently available only at Columbia Health Services. Since the HIV testing service was implemented five years ago, thousands of individuals in the University community have been tested.

Barnard's Health Services and the class of 1994 sponsored the survey which also asks students to rate, in order of importance, such health issues as abortion counseling, nutritional counseling, and smoking cessation counseling.

Dr. Polly Wheat, director of Barnard Health Services, said the survey seeks student opinion about how health services should allocate its limited funding.

"This survey is to get student opinion on AIDS and AIDS testing within testing of a whole bunch of things Barnard Health Services might be doing," Wheat said. "How much do you want AIDS testing compared to other things?"

Although Health Services officials are still evaluating the results of the survey, Wheat said students' opinions will be instrumental in determining the possibility of offering HIV testing.

“Student input is a very important part of any decision for provisions of student services,” she said. Alysia Kwon, president of the class of '94, who helped formulate the survey, said AIDS testing at Barnard is a two-sided issue.

“On the one hand, why shouldn't a women's institution offer that type of testing or on the other hand the environment might be too small, and it wouldn't be as confidential as getting it done at Columbia,” Kwon said.

Kwon said she thought some students might be indifferent to AIDS if they are not sexually active. “It is either a big issue or a non-issue,” she said.

Laura Pinsky, director of Columbia Gay Health Advocacy Project at Columbia Health services, said establishing a HIV testing at Barnard similar to the Columbia service would not be difficult.

“The only concerns would be that they do it anonymously with good counseling and provisions to arrange for medical care and psychological support if someone were positive,” Pinsky said.

Pinsky suggested individuals give a false first name when scheduling an appointment to ensure anonymity.

“We don't take any information that would possibly identify them,” she said.

Stacy Hill, BC '96, said she thought Barnard Health Services should begin HIV testing.

“I think they should have it at Barnard because for some students Columbia would be inconvenient,” Hill said.

Hill added AIDS should not merely be regarded as a heterosexual or homosexual issue. “It is a human issue, because the probability is that you will know one or two people affected by it,” she added.



SPECTATOR/JORDAN KARP

Somalia-born fashion model Iman recounted her journey home to a country ridden by civil war, drought, and starvation in a presentation yesterday at the School of International and Public Affairs.