

## Medicine by John Grauerholz, M.D.

### AIDS continues to spread

*Reports from different parts of the world make it obvious that poor, non-white populations are the main victims.*

**A** newly released study of AIDS by the Centers for Disease Control shows that one out of every four men aged 25-44 admitted to surveyed hospitals in New York City tested positive for HIV infection. The April 4 edition of the newspaper, *New York Newsday* reports that Dr. Timothy Dondero released the most comprehensive results to date of the so-called Sentinel Hospital Survey at an AIDS conference at Johns Hopkins University. For two years, CDC has carried out large-scale anonymous testing of people treated for non-AIDS-related ailments at 26 hospitals nationwide, selected to reflect different segments of the population. Three hospitals in New York City and three in New Jersey participated.

Dondero said, "The overall rate for New York City hospitals was 8% positive." The highest rate was in the male population aged 25-44, where 24% of men and 8.1% of women tested positive. Dondero told the press, "This rate [of 24% among men] is higher than what has been reported out of Africa." He also said the CDC believes the only declines in rates of new infections are among homosexual men in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Elsewhere, he said, the epidemic is growing. The Sentinel Hospital Survey shows a steady increase for all demographic groups nationwide.

Dr. Gerald Friedland of the AIDS program at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx said he found the CDC study "very, very sad. The epidemic is clearly not declining, and I think all indicators for our environment are that things will get much worse. . . . The

potential consequences of this information are staggering."

At a Mexico City conference held to discuss training personnel involved in prevention and control of AIDS, Mexico's Health Secretary, Jaime Sepúlveda Amor, who is also the director of the organization dealing with AIDS in Mexico, Conasida, revealed on March 27 that 1 out of every 200 men in Mexico City aged 25-45 is infected with the HIV virus. He added that he assumed that those infected were sexually active. Taking this to the national level, Sepúlveda reported that 1 out of every 4,000 men was either infected or had already died of the virus. While there are 3,800 AIDS cases officially reported, Sepúlveda said that in reality, there were probably more than 6,000 cases.

At the same conference, the director general of Medical Services at the National University (UNAM), Rafael Valdes, warned that in proportion to its population size, Mexico has the fifth-highest number of AIDS cases in the world. The UNAM is also a high-risk location for the spread of AIDS, Valdes said, due to the age of the student population.

Findings by a team of Thai and international AIDS experts are putting the number of people infected with HIV in Thailand at 45,000-50,000, more than three times the official figure of 14,000. "The review team has made a very broad attempt to make a rough estimate of infected persons in Thailand, based on very incomplete information," Dr. Gary Slutkin, one of the team members attached to the Global Program on AIDS of the World Health Organization, is quoted

in the *Bangkok Post* March 30. Dr. Slutkin said that the team is beginning to see "the most early evidence of infection in groups that may represent the general population." The team discovered that HIV was spreading faster than expected.

The *South China Morning Post* reported March 28 that Hong Kong doctors are warning that AIDS is no longer confining itself to non-Chinese and homosexuals. The chairman of the AIDS scientific committee of the Department of Health, Dr. Yeoh Eng-kiong, is quoted saying that the virus is becoming more deeply rooted in the local Chinese community and heterosexual infection has increased. "What is worrying is the increasing number of infected persons you find among the heterosexuals . . . there has been quite a marked increase," Dr. Yeoh said. Of 140 registered as carrying the HIV virus, 95 were Chinese and 45 non-Chinese, while among Hong Kong's 36 AIDS victims, 19 were Chinese and 17 non-Chinese. There has been a total of 20 heterosexuals diagnosed as carrying the AIDS virus.

What is striking about these reports from diverse parts of the world is that the disease continues to spread among impoverished non-white populations. Given the general policy of the Bush administration toward Mexicans, Asians, and blacks in the United States and elsewhere, it is hard to escape concluding that the administration isn't very upset about this.

The idea of mass depopulation appeals to Mr. Bush and his environmentalist utensils, such as EPA chief William Reilly. The nice thing about disease is that the less you spend on it, the more effective it is. The continuing spread of HIV infection indicates that time is running out for those who believe in the future of the human race.