

Why minorities don't trust Disease Control

By JESSE H. WALKER

The Centers for Disease Control paid \$12,000 for an analysis of its efforts to fight AIDS among Blacks and Hispanics, but then deleted all criticism of the programs before releasing the report at a recent national conference of minority health workers, held in Washington, D.C.

The Atlanta Constitution, in Atlanta where CDC is headquartered - blasted the CDC action by saying in an editorial that "it is easy to understand why Black and Hispanic health officials question the federal government's commitment to fighting AIDS in minority communities. For one thing, the CDC, which is spearheading the AIDS campaign, has shown a disturbing tendency to avoid being open and honest about its efforts among Blacks and Hispanics.

"Also," said the Constitution, "it had dragged its feet in involving minorities in meaningful roles in the planning and execution of strategies to tackle the problem. It has asked those who work with at-risk segments of minority communities to trust it, but has not demonstrated it is deserving of that trust."

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and the CDC. McKane said the CDC's decision to eliminate criticism of its effort may have led to an opposite effect.

"It would have been more convincing if the CDC had been up front," he told the Constitution.

Mason has acknowledged that parts of the analysis, including that which described the agency's future plans, were condensed from 16 pages to two

after they were reviewed by CDC official. Dr. Mason declined to say why the agency deleted critical

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"Does it take very long to smoke that?"

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It also concluded that the agency lacks in formation about the "knowledge, attitudes and behaviors" of minority populations, and lacks a program to encourage minority involvement in AIDS prevention and education.

Blacks, Hispanics and other minorities now account for two out of every five adults with AIDS in the United States. The problem is likely to get worse. The CDC estimates that among Blacks and Hispanics, there are 200,000 infected homosexual and bisexual men, 200,000 infected heterosexual drug users, 100,000 infected women and 15,000 infected children and infants.

With 14,600 new AIDS cases among minorities expected in the next year alone, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop has warned that the only way to control AIDS is by educating at-risk segments of the population.

The conference of 2,000 minority health workers, held last month, was intended to encourage future cooperation between minority health officials

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Community under seige:

The AIDS epidemic in Harlem

By PETER A. COOPER

Part 2

Government funding for AIDS prevention and treatment programs has increased sharply in response to the growing epidemic. But critics claim little of it has found its way to Harlem and other inner city neighborhoods.

The government has poured millions of dollars into the Gay Men's Health Crisis, for example, an organization created in 1983 to provide a broad range of services to people with AIDS. But no comparable organization exists to serve AIDS victims in upper Manhattan or the other boroughs.

"Here we are seven years into a major epidemic and very little is being done," says Suki Ports, former director of the Minority Task Force on AIDS, a Harlem-based support group. "The government has not taken responsibility. There's a feeling that these people are expendable."

State officials claim funds have been available to provide services to AIDS victims in Harlem, but the money has often gone begging because of the absence of a suitable organization to carry out the work. "You can't provide the funds in a void," says Frances Tarlton, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Health. "You can't hand the money over without some demonstration of the ability to handle the task."

The state has set aside \$300,000 in "start-up" funds to create an organization in Harlem modeled after GMHC, according to Tarlton. But critics have scoffed at the small amount offered by the state. "People were outraged," says

Barbara Turk, AIDS coordinator for Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins, one of the most outspoken city officials on the epidemic. "That is squat."

Dr. Lorraine Hale, president of Hale House, a shelter for drug-dependent children in Harlem, says it took her nearly three years to persuade the state to fund a group home for AIDS babies in Harlem. "They made us jump through all kinds of hoops," says Hale. "I was patently ignored until other people set up similar programs. People outside our community get the money and we get whatever is left over."

The track record of community leaders in Harlem does not appear to be much better. Edward Fordham, chairman of Community Board 10 in Central Harlem, agrees not enough has been done to combat AIDS in his district. But when asked what actions his board has taken concerning the epidemic, Fordham responded: "We're still studying the issue."

The lack of government support is probably more a function of political power than blatant discrimination. While the gay white community has organized an effective political lobby to demand government action, few politicians or community leaders have come forward to champion the cause of drug addicts and gay people of color. Blacks and Latinos rarely occupy key policy-making positions where decisions are made about where and how AIDS funding should be spent.

"The people who make the decision are middle-aged white men," observes Dr. Paul Goodhart, assistant director of the

AIDS program at Metropolitan Hospital in East Harlem. "They're not getting the disease, so what do they care? The people who are dying are drug addicts and gays, and who cares about them?"

But there have been some positive developments in recent months. U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel, whose district includes a large chunk of Harlem, has co-sponsored two bills in Congress which would have a direct impact on the battle against AIDS in poor neighborhoods. One proposal would provide \$400 million for a variety of AIDS-related services, including drug abuse treatment, counseling and testing for IV drug users, pediatric services and education. The second bill calls for \$550 million in AIDS research and education. Gov. Cuomo's budget includes \$27.7 million for AIDS-related services, education and outreach an increase of nearly \$12 million over last year's budget.

Many observers believe the key to stemming the tide of the epidemic is providing more education and treatment for drug addicts. Only 35,000 drug treatment slots are available in the city to serve an estimated 250,000 addicts. The waiting time to get into these programs ranges from one to three months. The state has agreed to provide funds for 5,000 additional treatment slots. But critics argue that is far short of the number needed to cope with the crisis.

While there is no evidence to suggest the government has deliberately discriminated against minority victims of the epidemic, some observers believe there are racist overtones

to the government's policies. "If this had been a white, suburban disease, the government would have intervened a long time ago," says Olga Mejia, director of a state-funded AIDS testing site at 145th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. "It wasn't until two years ago that people said this is serious. Before that the attitude was, hey, it's only drug addicts and homosexuals."

City officials have received numerous complaints about discrimination against people with AIDS in medical care, housing, employment and other areas. But the records give no indication that minorities are victimized any more than whites. "I'm not sure discrimination is color-bound as much as it's economic-based," says Mitchell Karp, an attorney with the AIDS discrimination unit of the city Department of Human Resources. "The problems may be different in Harlem than in the West Village, but they're not necessarily worse."

Karp says most of the 800 complaints his unit has received have come from whites. But those figures may reflect a reluctance on the part of minority members to become involved in costly and time-consuming litigation. Minorities may also be less likely to come forward, Karp says, because they have grown accustomed to discrimination in other areas of their lives.

It's not just the government which has failed to respond to the AIDS epidemic. Many observers believe the minority community itself has turned its back on the crisis. "AIDS is a major stigma," says Dr.

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'Helping Hand' rally on AIDS

By HAROLD L. JAMISON

In the 13 months Frozena Concepcion has worked as an AIDS social worker at Harlem Hospital, 25 patients have died of the deadly disease.

"None of them wanted to die, they all wanted to live," Concepcion confided. "Their median age is 30, and each one we lost seemed to take a part of me with them. In the beginning it was a lot more difficult to handle, but

Aug. 5, they will sponsor the "Helping Hand" rally at St. Marks Church, 65 W. 138th St. at 7 p.m. to address the issues and concerns of AIDS.

"We decided it was necessary to talk about it (AIDS) so the people can learn about this disease. You know at any given time 70 percent of the general population at Harlem Hospital have either drug or alcohol related problems. And because

homeless and are dying," Concepcion said.

Concepcion, Dorsey and Long have been joined in their effort by The Minority Task Force on AIDS, the office of Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins, The American Red Cross, Gay Men's Health Crisis, Harlem Hospital and others.

"The name, Helping Hand Fellowship, means just what it says," Long a registered nurse

ty things." But there are a lot of things happening to our people that we want to ignore because they feel they can't do anything about them."

"It's an absolute plague," said Dorsey also a social worker. "And it's time to talk directly with the community group that is at risk. We need to go directly to the community where all types of substance abuse exist."

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FUNDRAISER - DRAWS CELEBS: Recent gala fundraiser for the Dance Theater of Harlem (DTH) drew a crowd to its benefit performance at City Center. Pictured (l to r) Actress Cicely Tyson (DTH Board Member); Granville L. Stevens, senior counsel, Revlon Inc.; Ann Foreman, sculptor and television news correspondent Charlayne Hunter-Gault.

The AIDS epidemic in Harlem

(Continued from Page 4)

Raphael Tavarea, a psychiatrist at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital and chairman of the Hispanic AIDS Forum. "No other label causes more hatred and venom. There's fear and suspicion associated with the disease, particularly in poor communities."

"As bad as homophobia is, the rage against drug users is much worse," says David Willis, editor of Millbank Quarterly, a respected New York medical journal. "People associate them with violent crimes and theft. People don't like drug addicts. When they are Black, they like them even less."

The Black church, traditionally a major social force in Harlem, has been notable for its absence in the fight against AIDS. Black religious leaders, outspoken on other social issues, have been reluctant to assert themselves on AIDS because of the sexual nature of the disease and the immoral conduct -- in the church's eyes -- of its victims. "The churches in the Black community have been abysmal," says Willis. "They are in a very strong position of social intellectual leadership. But they have done next to

nothing."

The Rev. Calvin O. Butts 3d, executive minister of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, the nation's largest Black congregation, acknowledges that he was "caught as flat-footed as everyone else" in the early years of the epidemic. But Butts asserts that he and other Black clergymen are now speaking out more forcefully on AIDS.

While he calls drug addiction and homosexually "against the will of God," Butts says the church has a "divine responsibility" to take care of AIDS victims. Yet he and other Black religious leaders have opposed efforts to distribute free condoms and hypodermic needles, which many medical experts believe would save lives by preventing the transmission of the deadly virus.

"Passing out needles and condoms is like saying you can't do anything about drugs, so you might as well pass out cocaine and crack," says Butts. "We know it's difficult to get people to do what's right. But that doesn't mean we should stop trying."

The minority press, although slow to respond to the epidemic at first, has made AIDS coverage a top priority in recent

years. El Diario-La Prensa, a Spanish-language daily, runs at least three stories a week on the epidemic and has published several special supplements on AIDS, according to metropolitan editor Rossana Rosado. The Amsterdam News, a Harlem-based weekly, has published dozens of articles on AIDS in the past year. The WLIB and WBSL-FM, two Black-owned radio stations, have aired scores of public service programs on the epidemic.

The apathy by some members of the community may stem from a common perception that only gays and drug addicts are at risk. "There's a misconception that people who aren't members of a high risk group can't get the disease," says Dr. Tavares. "They don't understand that it's not what group you identify with that puts you at risk, it's what you do."

"There's a certain snobbishness that AIDS is a class-bound disease," observes Dr. Ernest Quimby, a sociologist who is studying the Black community's response to the epidemic. "There's a comforting delusion among the Black middle class that folks are safe and the 'scum' is being eliminated."

Cops acquittal irks

(Continued from Page 3)

three shots at it, but none struck Mrs. Ferraro. But because of a mistaken radio transmission, the cops who finally stopped her on Park Ave. and 124th St. believed she had fired shots at the officers.

Though the grand jury found Sgt. O'Connor's use of deadly physical force to be justified, it indicted him for tampering with physical evidence, a class E felony, punishable by up to four years in prison.

The other officers whom the



Commission opposes free needle giveaway

The Black Leadership Commission on AIDS in a dramatic vote on Thursday opposed the City's plan to distribute clean hypodermic needles as an experiment, to reduce the spread of AIDS to Intravenous Drug Users in New York City. The Commission also voted to endorse the Citizens Commission on AIDS statement that supports the immediate provision of treatment for every Intravenous Drug User who wants it and expanded efforts to draw IV drug users to treatment. The Commission supports targeted AIDS education for all those at risk and emphasized the expansion of quality treatment for IV drug users within their communities.

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COMMISSION MEMBERS are (l.-r.): Harriet Michel, Dr. Roberta Vogel, Darwin Davis, Wilbert Tatum, Amina Abdur-Rahman, Reverend Calvin Butts, Assemblyman Albert Vann and Dr. Roberta Justice.

Dr. Stephen Joseph, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Health and Dr. Benny Primin, President of Addiction Research and Treatment Corporation presented opposing views on the needle exchange program. The experimental model includes controlled exchange of clean needles for dirty needles among 200 of the City's intravenous drug users. However, Dr. Primin and Dr. Joseph did agree on the dire need for increased treatment for IV drug users.

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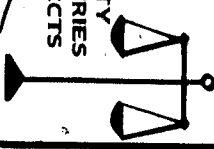
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The Black Leadership Commission on AIDS is now in the process of formulating an action plan to oppose the City's needle exchange project and to work on the expansion of quality

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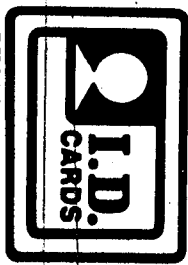
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Dr. Primm and Dr. Joseph did agree on the dire need for increased treatment for IV drug users.

The Black Leadership Commission on AIDS is a 52 member organization consisting of a cross section of the City's Black politicians, clergy, social policy experts, medical professionals and agency executives. The group met at the Equitable Life Assurance Society and took this vote after presentations were made.

The Black Leadership Commission on AIDS is now in the process of formulating an action plan to oppose the City's needle exchange project and to work on the expansion of quality drug treatment for every IV drug user who wants it.

There was no evidence that the City's plan would reduce the spread of the HIV virus and there was great concern regarding the message such a program would send to IV drug users and to our youth.

Dr. James Dumpson and Dr. Mark Wade are co-chairs of the Commission which is located at the New York City Mission Society. The Executive Director is Calvin O. Pressley. Mr. Basil Paterson hosted the Session at the Commission's request.

Teachers Against