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Sex Pamphlet Causes Controversy

By TWYLA RAE
ANDERSEN

"The need for behaviour modification outweighed the offensive language of the pamphlet." This was James Gill, V.P. of University

Affairs reaction to the controversy concerning the pamphlet SEX, which was distributed among UNB students during registration week.

The students' Unions of Nova Scotia (SUNS) applied for a Federal grant to form an AIDS information campaign for Universities. Sitting on the committee for the program were representatives from SUNS and representatives from student Unions of Atlantic Universities. Gill represented UNB's Student Union.

Apparently the project was funded by the Federal Centre for AIDS, which did not approve of the printed pamphlets.

In July, the management committee drew up the pamphlet, but the centre section which is causing all the controversy, was not in this original. When the pamphlet arrived at the University a day before student registration, they were found to contain the extra section which used course language.

The UNB Student Union requested 5,000 of these pamphlets.

With only a day to review the pamphlet, the UNB Student

Union briefly reviewed it. Eventhough Gill felt that the language was extreme and sometimes severe, he felt that the need for student knowledge of the risks and threats of AIDS and H.I.V. was necessary considered current statistics.

Questions are still being raised in the middle section containing the course language was printed in the pamphlet. Gill will be attending a meeting in Halifax this week to hopefully clarify the confusion.

The Executive of the Student Union felt that the pamphlet was informative even though it was rather severe. They felt that they had a duty to the students to inform them of AIDS prevention. As well, the pamphlet was distributed at no cost to the Student Union.

Wayne Carson, president of the Student Union, is happy with the controversy that the pamphlet has arose. He said that it must be considered "that 2 in every 1,000 University, students has AIDS, statistically, UNB has thirteen

cases."

He continues with saying "AIDS is here. It's at UNB. It is no longer someone else problem it has become our own."

Kelly Lamrock, V.P. General at St. Thomas University, Stated that the pamphlet is excellent on informative except for the controversial middle section. "It just doesn't work. The message of AIDS awareness is lost among street language."

The council at STU unanimously passed a motion not to distribute the pamphlet. The council is now looking into setting the pamphlet reprinted without the centre section.

Lamrock agrees that there is a necessity for AIDS awareness. But the pamphlet is not a proper means of educating the students. "We have to stop saying we need an AIDS education program, we need a good AIDS education program."

UNB's AIDS Co-ordinator Responds

The following is a statement by Grace Getty, Co-ordinator of UNB's AIDS Program.

The brochure, Sex which was handed out at registration at UNB was produced and distributed by the National Post Secondary AIDS Education project, which is sponsored by the Students Union of Nova Scotia. It was not a part of UNB's AIDS program, having never been seen by the coordinator of the AIDS Program at UNB prior to its distribution. However, since several complaints have been received about this brochure, I have decided to respond.

The intent of this brochure, to deliver clear information about AIDS, and HIV infection was applaudable. Some parts of the brochure are excellent. In particular, the section on being a friend to someone with AIDS, risk of alcohol, as well as some of the high-lighted comments are effective. However, other pieces of information needed to be clarified. For example, insertion of the word "American" in relation to the study of incidence of HIV in university students is important, since American HIV incidence rates tend to be several years in advance of Canadian rates.

The major concerns arise out of discussion of the sexual risks. The authors of the brochure need to clarify what is meant by sexual behavior. It

would have been useful to have included the activities of "hugging, kissing, massaging, mutual masturbation and holding each other" as safe sexual activities, rather than separating them.

The categories of sexual activity need to be defined, so that the reader understands, for example, what "minimal to lower" risk means. Some activities are incorrectly placed in terms of risk activities. For example, fisting was placed in lower possibility of HIV transmission, whereas research has found a high correlation between fisting and HIV infection. In fact, "fisting" is a term that needs to be defined since few individuals understand what it means.

While persons have complained to me initially about "gutter language" in this brochure, further discussion has shown that their real reaction is to inclusion of activities such as ingestion of feces as sexual behavior. Several activities that are named such as "ingesting urine" are practiced by very small numbers of people. Inclusion of these activities in relation to a brochure on AIDS has resulted in a homophobic backlash, in which these aberrant behaviors are attributed only to gay individuals. In reality, they tend to be practiced by a small number of

heterosexuals. Some individuals have reacted to this content with such repugnance that they did not read further, missing important information.

In my opinion, it is more useful to clearly delineate principles of transmission of HIV, and to explain why certain sexual activities create higher risks than others. Lists of behavior won't ever cover the multitude of activities that some individuals enjoy. However, the understanding that exchanging semen, seminal fluid, and vaginal fluids in intercourse is a risk behavior that could lead to infection with HIV if one partner was infected with HIV is important. Understanding why some behaviors produce more risk than others is the key to maintaining safer sex behavior.

In conclusion, the intent, and some of the information carried in this brochure was excellent. Some information needed to be clarified, or corrected. This could have been achieved, if there had been collaboration with persons who had more experience in health education. In future, I hope to be given some opportunity for discussion prior to dissemination of this kind of information.



Brought to you by your student association.

The Controversial SEX Pamphlet

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