

does have something to do with it. I know two people who have died of AIDS. It's very bizarre. When you see that happen, you know it's serious," said Tomasek.

McNeil shares O'Brien's hope that AIDS will make people more responsible about sex.

"AIDS has forced people to talk to their partner before sex about sexual histories. So people will be opening up rather than just jumping into bed without any discussions," McNeil said.

According to Optima Consultants, a polling agency, who did a report on AIDS in April, 80 per cent of the population in the National Capital Region feel the government should place more priority on fighting AIDS than on any other serious health condition.

Although 96 per cent of the public said they realize not only gays can contract AIDS, 35 per cent said they view gays as principally responsible for spreading AIDS. Only one per cent of the gay population had the same view. But the majority of heterosexual people (54 per cent) and gay people (84 per cent) said those who engage in casual sex with different partners are principally responsible for spreading the disease.

However, as the ACHA says in one pamphlet on safe sex, while the risk of AIDS can be reduced by reducing the number of sexual partners, it's inaccurate to equate AIDS with promiscuity. But to reduce the risk of contracting AIDS or any other sexually transmitted disease (STD), the ACHA advises you to know your sexual partner well before having sex.

The ACHA says STDs are spread by bacteria and viruses moving from one person to another. The micro-organisms travel in body fluids like semen, blood and vaginal mucus and can be transmitted if the mucus is not protected. Therefore, the ACHA advises that you avoid the exchange of bodily fluids during sex, especially since condoms haven't been proven to eliminate the risk of AIDS. The ACHA also suggests avoiding any injury to body tissues, refraining from using or sharing any intravenous drugs, not mixing alcohol or drugs with sexual encounters (because you might forget to use a condom), and not sharing razors or toothbrushes.

The ACHA also stresses in their pamphlets that AIDS is not just a gay disease.

"Nice people get herpes and straight people get AIDS."



BANG. YOU'RE DEAD!

Blatant or obnoxious? Only our American cousins will know for sure.

First-year students at Dalhousie received information packages dealing with the AIDS issue. Included in the package was information from the Red Cross, Health and Welfare Canada, and the local Metro Area Committee on AIDS.

Each package also included a condom, perhaps to emphasize that the practice is just as important as the theory.

One second-year student at Dalhousie says it's unfortunate that this information was not included in previous years' orientation kits.

"I know lots of guys who are very sexually active and it may make them more aware of the dangers. It's not important whether everyone will take the information seriously. What is important is that the information is there to dispel all the myths that are circulating," he says.

A first-year Dal student thought the information was needed and long overdue. "Students need this sort of information (on AIDS) to make informed decisions. Ignorance breeds mistakes," she says.

1500 packages were handed out to students, and although it would be hard to gauge how effective the information was, Student Union President Caroline Zayid says her office didn't receive any negative feedback for distributing the information.

Dalhousie currently has only two condom machines on the campus, both located in the men's washroom on the first floor of the Student Union Building. The warning sticker on the machines states, "Not sold for the prevention of disease or birth control".

The Student Union is now considering putting more machines in the building, in both the men's and women's washrooms. The new machines will feature advertising concerned with safe sex.

SETTING IT STRAIGHT

AS THE WAR ON AIDS MOVES INTO HIGH GEAR, SOME CRITICS QUESTION THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MESSAGES WE'RE RECEIVING.

ARE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ANY BETTER INFORMED?