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AIDS cure may be long

AIDS is a complex problem for which there are no easy answers. Currently, there is no known cure nor vaccine for prevention. However, there are presently two potential vaccines being researched in the U.S. that show promise. One of these vaccines has just been approved by the U.S. Drug and Food Administration for testing on humans.

The researchers are hoping to find out if such a vaccine can be safely injected into humans without giving them serious side effects. Even more fundamental is the question of whether or not the vaccine will stimulate the body to produce antibodies against the material injected, i.e. Will it protect people who become exposed to the AIDS virus? Because the incubation period for AIDS is so long, the answer to the vaccine's effectiveness may not come for years.

Yet there are more problems on the horizon. The AIDS virus mutates faster than any other virus. It keeps changing the biochemical composition of its outer coat. So even if the vaccine induces an antibody, it may not protect against a mutated virus.

can be thankful and proud." No case of AIDS has been detected in Alberta due to blood transfusions since screening began. As well, one cannot get AIDS by donating blood. Needles used for medical purposes are always sterile.

Dr. Larke outlines the steps that ensure that the blood supply remains completely safe:

The first line of defence is a careful personal screening procedure. Every potential donor is interviewed by a trained nurse on the Red Cross staff.

After the interview, the donor is given a pamphlet that outlines the people who shouldn't give blood:

- those with increased risk of AIDS
- those who have had gay sex since 1977
- those who share needles
- those who have been treated with blood products, especially before Oct. 1985
- prostitutes
- those who have had sex in foreign countries
- those who have had medical care (transfusions) outside Canada, U.S. and Europe
- partners of the above

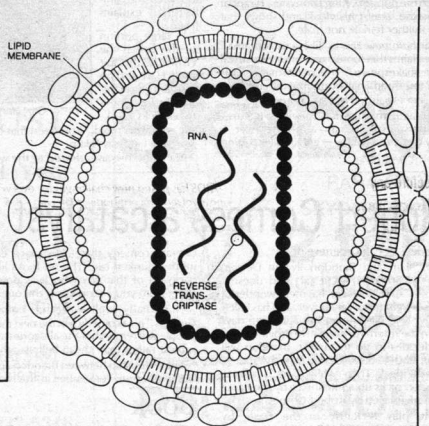
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Artist's conception of the HIV virion



The vaccine will be offered to people in high risk categories, people who may feel they have nothing to lose by being human laboratories. Nonetheless, it will be a long time before any potential AIDS vaccine is given to schoolkids along with their other shots.

The AIDS problem has produced its share of bizarre reactions to daily living by some people. Not the least of which is the unfounded distrust some have of giving or receiving blood.

Dr. Bryce Larke, Deputy Medical Director of the Canadian Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service in Edmonton, says Canada has an "incredibly safe blood supply for which we

At the end of the pamphlet the donor is given a choice of two boxes to check off indicating whether or not his or her blood can be used for transfusions.

This way, if for example someone is coerced into going to give blood, such as the Aggies blood drive every year, the person can have his blood drawn and then can submit this card, in full confidentiality, indicating the blood not be used.

Finally, the blood undergoes a battery of lab tests. It is screened for antibodies to HIV as well as for Hepatitis B and syphilis. Blood that shows positive for any of these is not used.

The combination of personal screening

recuperate iron supp significant

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