

\$150 shot in the arm

by Janice Bloomfield

Students in Dalhousie's Dental and Medical faculties are being strongly advised to purchase vaccination against hepatitis — advice which adds \$150 to a student budget.

Although only surgical students in the medical faculty must take the vaccine, 100 per cent of the dental and over 50 per cent of the medical students at Dal have chosen this precaution. And shouldn't they? As one student put it, "People are always talking about AIDS, but the risk is much higher with hepatitis."

Hepatitis B is a virus which invades the bloodstream and other body fluids. It causes a loss of functioning liver cells, resulting in fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, headaches, muscle pains, and chills. With the onset of jaundice, the fever goes, but convalescence continues over several months with fatigue, tenderness of the liver, and feelings of irritability, despondency, and lack of ambition — risks a student can ill afford.

This places the medical community at an especially high risk. Dentists' high-speed tools cause an "aerosol" effect, their name for

the mist formed from people's saliva. And since a dentist's mouth, nose, and eyes are positioned close to a potential carrier's the virus could easily be transferred by this means. Staff in hemodialysis units, physicians, nurses, and medical-laboratory workers more often come in contact through infected blood.

But health insurance in Nova Scotia does not cover these vaccinations. Dr. Wayne Sullivan, Director of Community Health for Nova Scotia, says, "Hepatitis is an occupational hazard. The hepatitis vaccine is to the medical profession what hard hats are for construction." Provincial health coverage provides immunization only against diseases which affect all individuals equally.

But this still doesn't help students. Merck-Sharp and Dohme, producers and distributors of the vaccine serum, are determined to retrieve all that they and their shareholders had at risk during research (the serum only came out in the late 1970s).

Although there are whispers of adding the vaccine into medical school tuition, Dr. D. Cunningham of dentistry believes vaccination should be voluntary. As he says,

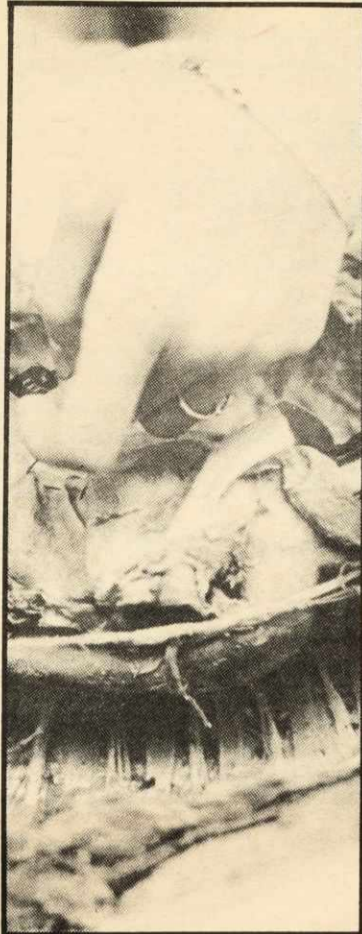


PHOTO: ROCHELLE OWEN

Been working around dead bodies lately? Get your shots.

"there's always that chance of maybe. Even with a carrier, one might not catch it." Nonetheless, he is quite pleased with the 100 per cent response of dental students to a voluntary vaccination program he began two years ago.

CFS activates

OTTAWA (CUP) — A return to student activism was the clarion call that ushered in Carleton University's Beth Brown as the new chair of the Canadian Federation of Students.

"There has been a concern that CFS is not having an ongoing impact on public opinion and that's because there hasn't been enough work done to get the public on-side," said Brown, elected at the 13th semi-annual general meeting of the CFS on November 18.

"I don't think protests necessarily alienate the public. I think they show them we are committed and they tell them which issues are key to students," said Brown.

Brown, a former council vice-president at Carleton University and vice-chair of the Ontario Federation of Students, defeated five other candidates at the meeting.

"You have to be brave enough to say to our government, 'What you are doing to PSE is wrong and you must bring it in line with our vision,'" said Brown, who was CFS campaign coordinator last year.

Brown's attitude seems in line with a number of motions passed at the meeting calling for 'grass-

roots' action at university and college campuses. The organization plans to hold a National Week of Action in January which will include:

- * A postcard campaign demanding that federal money given to the provinces for PSE be spent on PSE;

- * A day of mourning on which students will be encouraged to wear black armbands to mourn the state of PSE in Canada;

- * A one-hour boycott of classes from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on January 19, 1988.

Brown went neck-and-neck with Gavin Humphreys, vice-president external of the University of Guelph Graduate Students' Union, and five ballots were taken before a clear winner emerged.

Brown won the tight race on what some call her sensitivity to regional concerns and others call her lack of commitment to one national voice for students.

"I have a lot of regionally-based support. I've made a lot of friends in the Atlantic, for instance, through CFS, and I am seen as sensitive to their concerns," said Brown. "I believe in strong regional representation feeding into a strong national representation."

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C O U P O N

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