

College teacher told views on AIDS wrong

by Debbie Hum
Canadian University Press

MONTREAL — A sociology teacher at Montreal's Dawson College has come under fire for using course materials which teach students that heterosexuals are unlikely to get AIDS.

In Marc Grenier's class, students are taught if they're intravenous drug users, blood transfusion recipients or gay, they are at a high risk of contracting HIV, the virus believed to cause AIDS.

But that contradicts assertions by AIDS educators and activists that the virus is contracted through high-risk behaviour and not because one is a member of a particular group.

Grenier's choice of course materials has angered some Dawson students.

One-third of Grenier's course, sociology of sexuality, deals with AIDS.

One of Grenier's sources is a series of articles from the Hamilton Spectator which state Canadians have been misled about AIDS by government, community groups and by the media.

The articles - published in August, 1991 - used statistics to show the "true scope" of AIDS and said no

data exists showing AIDS has spread out of so-called "high-risk groups." It suggested AIDS will not spread to the majority of Canadians.

Grenier also teaches theories put forward by a Toronto epidemiologist, Eric Mintz. Mintz says the average Canadian has about as much chance of contracting AIDS as dying in a commercial air crash - about three in a million.

"Comparing stats on (airplane) accidents to stats on AIDS is like comparing apples to oranges," said Sasha Goudriaan, a student in Grenier's class.

Grenier said criticisms have made him angry, and said he has the right to teach his course as he sees fit.

"I have a right of academic freedom and no...political activist group or member of a political activist group is going to come in this college and tell me what to teach in my course," he said.

Grenier added he is not the only teacher at Dawson using "hard-core statistics" in a course. He said he also refers to quarterly reports on AIDS from the Laboratory for Disease Control in Ottawa.

"I'm not giving a political agenda.

I'm giving students straight statistics," said Grenier. "I don't have the answers to all the questions about AIDS. Some of the best doctors in the world are still trying to figure out those questions."

Many AIDS groups say it is still impossible to know the extent of the effect of AIDS in Canada.

AIDS numbers give us only one piece of the puzzle and should not be used as if they give us the complete picture, according to AHEAD, a Tor-

onto AIDS advocacy group.

On average it takes 10 years or more from infection to an AIDS diagnosis, so current AIDS statistics only describe where the virus was several years ago, an AHEAD study found.

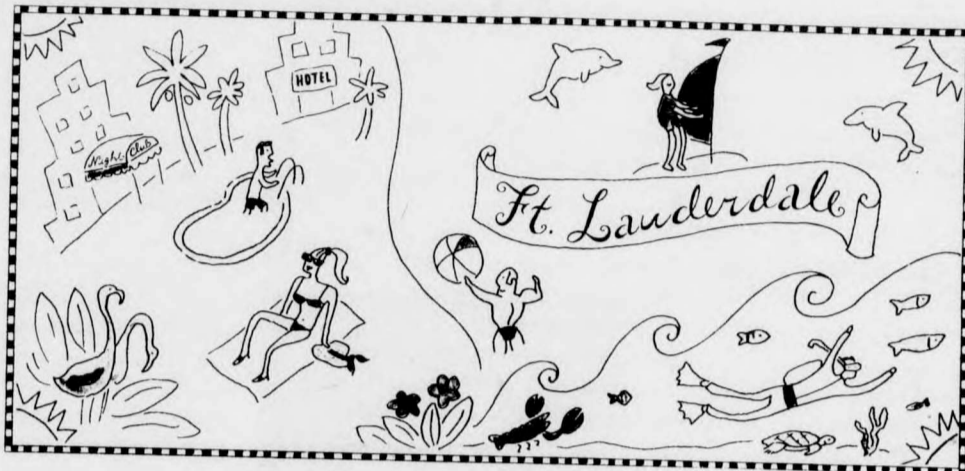
Organizations said they're concerned Grenier's statistics will give students a false sense of immunity to the virus.

"This generation is just getting into sex. They don't want to think

something really exciting can lead to a disease," said Robin Hand, a second-year social science student. "Boys don't want to use condoms and believing AIDS is not a heterosexual disease is an excuse not to use one."

Dr. Robert Remis, head of the AIDS surveillance group at the Centre for AIDS Studies at the Montreal General Hospital, said AIDS among heterosexuals is a serious threat in the United States and that there is no reason why it won't spread in Canada.

There are already documented cases of heterosexual transmission of HIV in Canada, he added.



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once a month, would be better, but unfortunately York would not even consider this because of the cost, she said.

Dryden, in charge of equality and social affairs, argues that the "Jane and John Doe" incident is only the tip of the iceberg of racism in this institution.

An in-depth study of who is hired for the department and hiring procedure will be included in the investigation. All security officers' personal and employment histories will be taken under very careful

scrutiny, Lee said.

Dryden feels that there is an insufficient representation of minority races within the security department.

"Why isn't there any African females in the whole force? Why is there only two African males?" she asked.

Dryden also said she feels York's security officers are too unapproachable, due to their uniform and behavior.

"Their stance is too intimidating," said Dryden. "The security department should not strive to be like police officers, especially with their previous dealings with the African community."

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