

Dentists may diagnose AIDS

by John Gushue
Science and Technology Writer
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OTTAWA (CUP) — Dentists may be able to diagnose acquired immune deficiency syndrome early in its incubancy through simple observations, according to a prominent oral pathologist.

Although symptoms such as weight loss and fatigue arise late in a patient's battle with the fatal disease, the appearance of small lesions on the sides of the tongue

could indicate a pre-AIDS condition which usually leads to AIDS, says Jens Pindborg at a news conference Sept. 30.

The presence of the whitish lesion, or "hairy" leukoplakia, appears to be unique to pre-AIDS, says Pindborg. Because it is not painful, the lesion could be missed until diagnosis is made during the disease's later stages.

In Ottawa to address the annual meeting of the Canadian Dental Association, Pindborg, a

Danish consultant to the World Health Organization, says dentists must be educated to treat patients with the symptom.

Hysteria among the health care profession and the general public has led to disputes everywhere, including British Columbia, where patients have refused to go to dentists who treat AIDS patients.

Bob Tivey, head of AIDS in Vancouver, says many AIDS patients must go to dentists after work hours in secrecy. "Their (the dentists) names cannot be released because at this point the public is so hysterical that if they found out they wouldn't go to these dentists," says Tivey.

Pindborg says fears of contracting the disease and transmitting it through dental offices are unfounded.

"To be affected, you have to have a massive (intake) of the virus. That is not the case with

saliva or tears, says Pindborg. The virus is usually spread through semen and blood, and the disease affects mostly gay men and hemophiliacs.

As well, of all dentists and hygienists who have treated AIDS patients in San Francisco, none have contracted the disease themselves, says Pindborg.

"We can tell (dentists) what is fact and what is fallacy," he says.

John Hardie, an Ottawa specialist and member of the national AIDS advisory committee, says the dental association will attempt to educate Canadian dentists about the disease and how to treat it.

"It's our responsibility to inform our members of all advances in dental care," he says. The CDA devoted a part of its three-day conference to discussing AIDS treatment.

The lesion, first discovered and documented late last fall by John

and Deborah Greenspan, two San Francisco researchers, may not appear in all patients who develop AIDS, though.

"It is difficult to say how many patients will have the lesion," says Pindborg. "We are just at the beginning of research that will take several years of follow-ups."

A dentist who discovers the lesion has a medical obligation to a patients, says Pindborg. "The dentist that is suspicious has a responsibility to refer (the patient) to the proper specialist," he said.

While there is still no cure in sight for the disease, an early diagnosis could mean life, rather than death, for AIDS patients should a cure be found. "Perhaps the earlier we can detect the disease, then the better the chance we can cure it," he says.

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Lesbian course renamed

MONTREAL (CUP) — Concordia University offered Canada's first ever course on lesbian sexuality over the summer. However, the course title was so "discreet" that no one knew what it was about.

The course at Concordia's Simone de Beauvoir Institute was given several tentative titles before it finally appeared as "female sexuality."

"I offered to teach a course on the lesbian experience in literature," says Yvonne Klein, the course instructor. "I was told it was called feminine sexuality: The Lesbian Experience. I didn't find out it was merely called Female Sexuality virtually until I walked in to teach it.

"No one knew what they were getting into," says Klein. "It wasn't what most of them expected. My chief regret is that a lot of lesbians didn't take the course who might have had they known about it. Others dropped it after seeing so many of the students enrolled had no background in the area, or basis for understanding the material."

Concordia offered the course after pressure from the Concordia Women's studies student organization.

According to Klein the course name was changed because the Concordia Curriculum Committee did not want "the dread word lesbian to appear on students' transcripts. Of course," she says, "No one has any problem with Fascism and Tyranny appearing on their record."

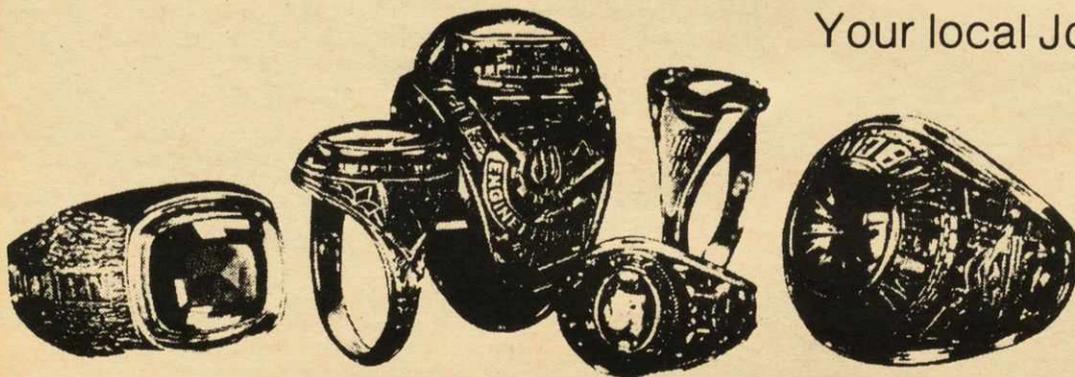
"It is significant that it took 'til 1985 for any place to try and give such a course," Klein says.

"The problems that it faced in coming out, you might say, shows how such a course is still viewed as bizarre, peculiar and irrelevant," she says.

The course covered lesbian authors from the turn of the century to the present and studied the peculiarity of the lesbian autobiography, says Klein.

"Historically, Lesbian writers would disguise themselves heavily. Then when it became possible to be open, it sparked an explosion of language — a new way of speaking," says Klein.

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