

The Current Crisis in AIDS
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Presented on Videotape
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AIDS – although we didn't call it that then -- first intruded into the work of the Public Health Service in June of 1981. This lecture was given on February 18, 1987. For the first four years between those two dates little had been said to the public by any government official about AIDS; I was told this was not my assignment. To repeat what I have said elsewhere, I filled a vacuum at the end of the first Reagan Administration as presidential appointees began to return to the private sector. No one appointed me to be the chief spokesperson of the government for AIDS, nor did I appoint myself; I just gradually became that. It was eight days since I had spoken publicly about AIDS.

The number of requests for me to speak on the subject of AIDS grew by leaps and bounds and on February 18, 1987, I made a video presentation of essentially what I had been saying about AIDS for the past few months in order that this videotape might be shown in places where I had no possibility of making a public appearance. I have no idea how many requests came in those days, because they came into so many different government agencies. The only time in my life I kept records of such requests was after I left my post as Surgeon General and in that first year, I averaged 65 requests a day to do something in the public arena. That leads me to believe that at the time in question the number of daily requests was more than that.

This was as concise a report as I could make and still touch all the high spots. The language was simple and frank and it might be reliably considered to be a primer on AIDS for the public based upon our knowledge up until that time. There is very little new in this lecture that hasn't been said before, but it is the first time that I attached a number to the percentage of AIDS cases based upon sharing of paraphernalia by I.V. drug abusers – 17 per cent. It is also the first time that I voiced another public health concern and that is the rise in AIDS among Black and Hispanic people. I gave the numbers, as we knew them at that time, Blacks accounting for 12 per cent of the population, but 25 per cent of the AIDS cases. Hispanics on the other hand accounting for 6 per cent of the population, account for 14 per cent of the AIDS cases.

For this audience, I stressed what I had said before; the social and spiritual development of your children is your business. Don't pass it up...don't pass it by...but pass it on.

I also said what I also said before, that unfortunately most parents agree with me 100 per cent, but many of them never do much more than agree with me.

One thing that is clear looking back on these lectures all at once from a distance of 15 years, is that our primary concern was the education of children and the manner in which it was done.

(NB – This was the first time that I made use of the necessary quote for the sexual history of a potential sexual partner, which later developed into: “When you have sex, you’re having sex with everyone your partner ever had sex with, etc, etc.”

Abstinence
Acquired Immuno-deficiency syndrome
AIDS
AIDS education
AIDS & Blacks
AIDS & Hispanics
Antibodies to the AIDS virus in the blood stream
Azidothymidine (AZT) as treatment
Condoms
Developmental age vs. chronological age
Hepatitis B
Heterosexual vs. homosexual transmission
Homosexual & bisexual men
Importance of sexual history of a sexual partner
Incidence of AIDS due to drug abuse
Kaposi’s sarcoma
Mutually faithful monogamy
Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia
Sex & sensitive affirmative human relationships
Sex education
Statistics of AIDS
Surgeon General’s Report – how to procure one
Virus of AIDS
Work of the National Cancer Institute

Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
National Coalition of Black & Lesbian Gays
National Conference of Catholic Bishops
National Council of Churches
National Education Association
National PTA
Pasteur Institute
President Reagan
Surgeon General’s Report on AIDS
Synagogue Council of America
“The Bridge of San Luis Rey”

Washington Business Group on Health
