

T ashe lived a  
wonderful and  
successful life:



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

t of the HIV/AIDS Arthur Ashe is an admirable and well known American tennis player who won many championships. He became the first African American male to win the mens Wimbledon title in 1975. Also, he was on the United States Davis Cup team from 1963 until 1984. Some of his other major accomplishments include helping to form what is now the Association of Tennis Professionals and winning the Australian Open, the United States Open, and the French Open.

Ashe lived a wonderful and successful life: however, in 1983, disaster struck! Ashe acquired an incurable disease through a tainted blood transfusion. This disease killed him in 1993. What is this incurable disease that still haunts the lives of so many people? This is a disease known as AIDS. AIDS is a fatal disease without a cure and a disease that responds to little treatment. How can the spread of AIDS be stopped? This paper will discuss the nature of the AIDS virus, the transmission and the prevention of transmission, as well as the available treatments for people with this disease.

First of all, AIDS is an acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. AIDS is acquired which means that it is not passed down from generation to generation through a persons genes. AIDS is a disease that attacks the immune system, a system in the body that produces white blood cells in order to fight off diseases.

This disease causes the immune system to be deficient, or weakened, so that it cannot properly fight off diseases. AIDS is a syndrome, or a group of illnesses with many possible symptoms that can occur together in a weakened condition. AIDS is a pandemic, meaning that it can be found on all

continents. The disease was discovered in 1983, by a French cancer specialist, Luc Montagnier, along with other scientists, at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. However, there were AIDS cases reported as early as the 1950s. “ The 80s will go down as the decade that AIDS began.

We want to know, - Why” (Bevan 27)? One of the reasons is the promiscuity of sexually active people during the 1980s and the sharing of intravenous hypodermic needles and syringes by drug users. Secondly, AIDS is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV. This virus attacks the antibodies in a persons immune system, thereby disabling that system. HIV works in an unusual way because it uses the immune system to its advantage. Viruses cannot live unless they are inside of a living cell called a host. The virus uses the host cell to reproduce themselves, causing the cell to die in the process. The new virii are then set free.

The HIV virus attacks T4 lymphocytes, which are a special type of white blood cell. These cells are the bodys method of defense. Without them, humans are susceptible to disease and infection. It is not HIV that kills people, but the opportunistic infections people get because of a weakened immune system. Bevan characterizes HIV by saying, “ Its the sneakiest virus of all.

It goes for the crucial link in the immune system, the cells at the heart of the fightback effort” (Bevan 24). This is why HIV is so dangerous. Being HIV positive does not mean that a person has full-blown AIDS, and not everyone who gets HIV develops full-blown AIDS. When one fully develops AIDS, the signs and symptoms become more evident.

These symptoms include: “ a failing immune system, persistent swollen lymph nodes and opportunistic infections” (Stine 114). A common example of a skin disorder caused by AIDS is Kaposi sarcoma. That is, “ a multifocal, spreading cancer of connective tissue, principally involving the skin; it usually begins on the toes or the feet as reddish blue or brownish soft nodules and tumors” (Stine 442). Lymph nodes are gland-like forms that help stop the spread of infection. When they become persistently swollen, one can develop lymphadenopathy syndrome or LAS. This condition can bring on mild symptoms of fever and weight loss. Other signs of full-blown AIDS include oral lesions such as thrush and hairy leukoplakia. People may also develop kidney disorders and gastrointestinal diseases like severe diarrhea that can cause weight loss.

Since AIDS is such a serious incurable disease, it is important to know how the disease is transmitted. One method of transmission is via bodily fluids by having sex. This includes all forms of sex: vaginal sex, anal sex, and oral sex. The transmission also occurs in many other sexual activities. The human immunodeficiency virus can be transmitted through vaginal secretions in women to men by way of the bloodstream. In the same way, men can pass HIV to women in their semen. Men can also pass it to other men by way of bodily fluids if the men are bisexual or homosexual. The more sexual partners one has, the greater the risk of contracting HIV.

“ There is a saying, in terms of AIDS, that when you sleep with someone, you are in effect sleeping with all their partners over the past five years” (Bevan 35). Another way that one can get HIV is by sharing hypodermic drug needles. “ Each time a person uses a needle and syringe, a tiny trace of

blood is left inside” (Bevan 10). The blood that is left inside of this needle could contain HIV. When the HIV infected needle or syringe is inserted into ones body, the virus is able to travel into that persons bloodstream, thereby transmitting HIV. Even if the needle appears to be clean, it can still contain HIV infected blood.

“ A drop of blood too small to be noticed can contain thousands of viruses” (Bevan 11). Drug users have enough problems to worry about without having to worry about getting AIDS. However, many drug users continue to share their needles because of excuses, desperation, and because sharing needles has become a ritual to develop closeness. Some people believe that if they inject the needle into the right place and dont hit a vein that they will be safe.

It doesnt matter where the needle is injected. As long as the needle is contaminated with HIV, there is a possibility of catching AIDS. Other drug users are so addicted and desperate that they would risk anything - even their lives to get high. “ For some addicts, the chance of catching AIDS seems less important than missing the next fix” (Bevan 15). Finally, some users share needles in order to feel accepted into the group. People who use drugs are often looking for something to belong to, and they will do anything to feel like they are part of a group.

They feel that they need to share needles in order to experience a special bond between themselves and others. It has become a ritual. However, no matter what the reason is that one has to share drug needles, there is never a good one. It is also possible for someone to become infected with AIDS

through a blood transfusion. Since a transfusion involves placing foreign blood directly into the recipients blood stream, the necessary condition for transmission is present, and that condition is the direct contact of potentially infected fluid with susceptible cells in the recipient. This is a method of AIDS transmission that the patient can do little about. Hemophiliacs who received blood transfusions before 1985 are the ones most at risk in this category.

Today, there is only a small possibility of someone getting HIV through a blood transfusion. This is because in June of 1985, hospitals began screening blood to see if it was HIV infected (Flynn 64). Presently, there is only a small chance that the tests will not notice the virus in the blood. " It is estimated that undetected HIV is present in fewer than one in four hundred fifty thousand to six hundred thousand units of blood" (Microsoft Corporation 7). Technicians also pasteurize the blood to assure elimination of HIV. Another way for AIDS to be transmitted is from an infected mother to her baby, either before or during childbirth, or through breast-feeding. The blood supplies of the baby and the mother are closely linked during pregnancy. Even though the mothers and the childs bloodstream are separated by the placenta, preventing the exchange of cells, the exchange of nutrients, blood, and small particles like viruses are still exchanged.

HIV infection during pregnancy mainly occurs during the third trimester because of small tears which sometimes occur in the placenta. " Current statistics indicate that there is about a 50% chance that an infected mother will produce an infected infant" (Conner 149). Most infected children die before the age of five years (Conner 151).

“ Even uninfected children born to HIV-infected mothers have an incidence of heart problems 12 times that of children in the general population”

(Microsoft Corporation 7). It is important that people realize that they are not only putting themselves at risk, but also the lives of others. However, it is not possible for a person to contract AIDS by casual contact. AIDS cannot be transmitted by simply touching someone, going to school with someone, or even hugging someone. In order for HIV to be transmitted, an exchange of bodily fluids must occur.

There is no other way. “ Additionally, HIV is unable to reproduce outside its living host; therefore, it does not spread or maintain infectiousness outside its host” (Microsoft Corporation 7). It is also impossible for HIV to be spread by insects. Many people, however, believe that mosquitoes and other sucking insects can do so.

However, HIV can only live for a short period of time outside of a cell, or host, and therefore, cannot infect the insect. So, if the insect is unable to be infected, then the insect is unable to infect human beings. Knowing the methods of transmission enables us to know how to prevent the AIDS virus. One way to prevent the spread of AIDS is by practicing abstinence or by having safe sex. Abstinence is defined as not having sex at all, and it is the safest practice. However, if one feels that he must have sex, then safe sex should be practiced.

Safe sex involves the use of a condom, according to the instructions on the packet. Latex condoms are the best condoms to use. One should also limit his sexual partners. The more sexual partners one has, the higher the risk of

contracting AIDS. There are also many other sexual activities with a lower risk other than having actual sexual intercourse.

These activities include: “ self masturbation, dry kissing, mutual masturbation, and wet, deep kissing” (Bevan 36). Anal sex is the riskiest form because the linings in the anus are more sensitive, and are more likely to tear, enabling HIV to travel into the body. If one refuses to practice abstinence or safe sex, he should be regularly examined by doctors in order to know if he has contracted AIDS or another sexually transmitted disease. By knowing, he can get treatment and can then be more careful when around others so that they will not get a disease, also. Another way to prevent AIDS transmission is by not handling or sharing any hypodermic drug needles. Many people do not believe that AIDS is transmissible by sharing drug needles because the HIV seems to be taken outside of the body first and then passed on.

This does occur, however, it is in a syringe, and blood cells are not exposed to the environment because of this. “ Also, it is usually done within a very short period of time, usually within seconds, or, at most, minutes” (Conner 150). Thus, the safest way would be not participating in any drug activity. Prevention of this mode of transmission involves breaking the link between individuals and the syringe. However, if drugs are used, and needles are shared, the needles should be properly sterilized. Having sterile needles available for free is in debate in many communities, and in some places in effect, especially in highly populated urban areas.



A health worker says, " Free needles will support the drug community, but arrest AIDS spread" (Bevan 12). Finally, in order to prevent the spread of AIDS, one must be aware of the fact that it is possible for anyone to get HIV. Many people believe that AIDS is a disease for certain stereotypes such as homosexuals and drug abusers. However, this is not true. Anyone can get HIV, no matter who he is. As mentioned earlier, Arthur Ashe, one of the worlds best tennis players, contracted HIV through a blood transfusion. He was not a homosexual and he did not share drug needles. However, he contracted HIV and it killed him.

Another devastating case of AIDS was the well known movie star, Rock Hudson. Hudson is, " a Hollywood legend and undisclosed homosexual. He was the first major public figure to reveal he had AIDS. Hudson died in 1985 at age 59" (Stine 59). Hudson, unlike Ashe, could have prevented his contraction of AIDS, however, he was frivolous and therefore contracted AIDS.

If you ever have sex, use drugs in non-sterile needles, or come into contact with any form of bodily fluid, there is a possibility of contracting HIV. True, there are people who are more at risk than others. These people are:" Hemophiliacs who received contaminated blood before 1985.

People who have lived or traveled to Central Africa (over the last 15 years) and had sexual relationships there. Homosexual and bisexual men. People who share needles to inject drugs" (Bevan 51). However, just because one does not participate in any of these risky activities does not mean that he should not be careful. As stated before, one cannot tell if somebody has AIDS

by looking at him. Therefore, people must be careful and protect themselves. Now that we know the methods of transmission, and the prevention of AIDS, we need to know what kind of treatments are available in case AIDS is acquired.

One way to treat AIDS is by using a drug called retrovir zidovudine or azidothymidine, which is commonly referred to as AZT. As stated earlier, AIDS is an incurable disease. There is also no vaccine for AIDS.

The drug AZT can delay the progression of AIDS in some patients. “ Clinical benefits from AZT may be apparent within six weeks of therapy; and continued treatment prolongs survival” (Stine 131). Also, new research shows that women with AIDS who receive AZT drug therapy during their pregnancies and give birth a C-section delivery may be providing their babies the best protection against HIV infection. Unfortunately, the drugs capability to prolong the life of an AIDS patient declines with time. Also, this drug does not stop the spread of HIV to other people. There are also other medicines available, and many are still in testing. Another form of treatment is alternating therapy.

Alternating therapy consists of taking different drugs on and off. It gives peoples bodies an opportunity to mend from the side effects of each drug. Patients can alternate between AZT and other drugs. It is possible in some cases, not to suffer any side effects if the alternating drugs are taken correctly.

Side effects can also be stopped before they start if alternating therapy is used. A further method of treatment for AIDS is treatment of the

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opportunistic infections caused by the breakdown of the immune system. Most commonly, people die from the cancers and other opportunistic infections caused from AIDS rather than from the virus itself. " The most common opportunistic infection seen in AIDS is Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP), which is caused by a fungus that normally exists in the airways of all people" (Microsoft Corporation 4). This is a serious, life-threatening disease.

Therefore, the better the infections are treated, the longer the person may live. The bad point of this is, " treatment for an OI is lifelong because of relapse if it is stopped" (Stine 116). Since the immune system is what is being attacked, the body cannot fight off the disease without drugs. If treatment for opportunist infections is stopped, a relapse is almost definite. Some of the newest treatments include more antiviral therapies, immune system boosters, and triple drug therapy. These are still in testing.

Each new approach and drug must be extensively evaluated for safety and effectiveness. So far, the immune boosters are not very effective. These are used to help the immune system fight off HIV. However, the triple drug therapy, which consists of indinavir, zidovudine, and lamivudine, have been prosperous. Triple drug therapy, also known as cocktail therapy, can suppress HIV for at least two years.

The main problem with these drugs is that testing is a long process. There have been many derogatory comments towards the FDA, or Federal Drug Administration, concerning the length of testing. Therefore, policies have changed in order to give quicker approval. However, " early availability of a

drug entails the risk that it may be used in people before its toxicity and side effects are fully understood” (Stine 337).

However, many people with AIDS are willing to take this risk with the hope that the drug may prove effective. In conclusion, AIDS is an incurable disease with few treatments, caused by HIV, transmitted by way of bodily fluids. AIDS is mainly transmitted through sex and sexual activities, and by sharing hypodermic drug needles. Sexual transmission is most dangerous if there are many sexual partners, and if there is not use of a condom.

Transmission via blood transfusions has become almost absent, thanks to blood screenings. Scientists are working hard on treatments and are working for a cure, however, it is lacking to be found. A World Health Organization official says, “ AIDS...will test our fundamental values and measure the moral strength of our cultures” (Bevan 6).

We are the only ones who can stop this pandemic. There is a way. “ Curable? No. Treatable? To a limited extent. Preventable? By a vaccine, no - but by changing our behavior, yes. This is how we must fight AIDS.

... Prevention is better than cure. And when theres no cure, prevention is all we have” (Bevan 46, 56).