

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome analysis essay



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AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) is related to HIV, but they are not one in the same. A person has AIDS only in the final stages of HIV, after the immune system becomes unable to defend itself against foreign bacteria, other viruses, and fungi, and allows for the development of certain cancers. The world first became aware of AIDS in the early 1980s. Growing numbers of gay men in New York and California were developing rare types of pneumonia and cancer, and a wasting disease was spreading in Uganda.

Doctors reported AIDS symptoms under different names, including “ gay-related immune deficiency” and “ slim,” but by 1985, they reported them all over the world. From the first days of the AIDS epidemic, the history of HIV has been one of stigma and activism as well as science. The people with AIDS and the healthcare officials advising the public didn’t know what the disease was or how it was transmitted. This confusion, and the speed with which the disease spread, led to an “ epidemic of fear” and to discrimination against those with HIV to be more at risk. We now know that HIV existed long before it was identified as the cause of AIDS in 1984. Blood analysis reveals instances of the virus as early as the 1940s.

While researchers aren’t sure exactly when and how HIV developed, the most likely theories posit that HIV-1 – the most common strain of the virus – was transmitted to humans from chimpanzees sometime in the early to mid-20th century. In 1985, the first blood test for HIV was approved. In 1986, AZT, a failed cancer drug, was tested as an HIV treatment for the first time. The trial was so successful that researchers stopped the study. AZT was the only AIDS treatment through much of the 90s.

In 1996, doctors started to prescribe combinations of medications, including new protease inhibitors, to control HIV. These “cocktails” were a treatment breakthrough, offering much brighter prospects for people living with HIV and AIDS. But the breakthrough only helped those with access to treatment. Since the development of combination antiretroviral therapy, HIV/AIDS professionals have focused much of their efforts on expanding access to the medications in that treatment.

The expansion has largely required funding to provide medicine to those who couldn't otherwise afford it. In 2006, the number of AIDS-related deaths and new HIV infections fell for the first time since the epidemic began 25 years before. According to the most recent estimates, about 33. million people are living with HIV today. The movie “And the Band Played On”: This is an amazing story of how the virus took off in America and an insight into why it remained so under-reported for so long.

It involves some very brave patients, irresponsible ones, incredibly dedicated medical professionals, major bungling by our government and the blood industry-some of it intentional and some paths paved with good intentions, and the mixed, frustrating reaction of the gay community itself. Shilts doesn't write completely without bias-he calls the decision of the CDC to release patient names to an NYC blood bank “incredibly stupid”. Also, Shilt's didn't agree with certain members of the Reagan administration and Reagan himself. His anger is not limited just to the government nor is this just an anti-Republican screed-he praises Orrin Hatch and Everett Koop while bitterly recalling the inaction of Ed Koch's administration in New York.

Gay leaders also were not a favorite of his. For all of that though, Shilts struggles to be fair and largely is successful. Randy Shilts masterpiece, "And The Band Played On", from the discovery of an unusual new organism that was killing a few people slowly and inevitably in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and multiplied quickly underground until it exploded into the number one health catastrophe on the planet. The fact that AIDS at first took its heaviest toll among gay men, and then among intravenous drug users, guaranteed that its early victims would become outcasts. The AIDS panic seems unbelievable in retrospect but was all too real in the 80s; people were forced off their jobs, children were barred from schools, and anyone who belonged to the "4-H club" (homosexuals, hard-drug users, hemophiliacs, and — incredibly — Haitians) were treated like pariahs. The secrecy and denial in dealing with the crisis helped it to spread persistent.

Shilts was equally angry at the Reagan administration, which preached moral cliches while withholding desperately needed funds for medical research; the radical gay community which refused to acknowledge its own responsibility for the sexually immoral behavior that helped spread the disease like wildfire, and those in the medical community who played grandstanding politics and plain old-fashioned spite while patients were dying all around them. And then of course there was the media, which treated this puzzling, terrifying new disease — which for two years after its discovery didn't even have a name — as something the "general public" didn't have to be concerned about, until heterosexual men and women began to be infected. But there were also the heroes — the physicians who devoted their days and nights to treating their patients, gay men like Larry Kramer who refused to

let the gay community sweep the problem under the rug, Rock Hudson, whose up-front honesty and admission of his illness shocked the American public and helped to bring AIDS out of the closet once and for all, and C. Everett Koop, Reagan's Surgeon General, who refused to play politics and demonstrated the leadership his boss lacked in his common-sense and compassionate approach to meeting the crisis, to the horror of his right-wing public. One shares his disgust at the doctors who cared more about their own self-promotion than about their patients; the right-wing politicians who treated the victims of a devastating and deadly disease as if they were sinners who had earned the wrath of God; the gay men who didn't care how many people they infected as long as they could enjoy the promiscuous atmosphere of the bath houses, and most incredibly, the for-profit blood banks, which refused to admit their product was carrying a deadly virus and fought against blood testing for three years while the number of people who died from transfusions of infected blood grew by the thousands.

And in a heartbreaking conclusion to this story, Shilts deliberately put off having his own blood tested while he was writing this story because he didn't want his judgment influenced if he turned out to be HIV positive. It was only after he finished the story that he learned that he was infected with the virus that had killed so many and in a few years would also kill him. Shilts' death from AIDS was a tragedy, but he left us this magnificent story as his legacy. We are the richer and the wiser for his information, his insight and his understanding.

HIV affects millions of people worldwide - people living with HIV as well as their friends, families and partners. By educating yourself about HIV and <https://assignbuster.com/acquired-immune-deficiency-syndrome-analysis-essay/>

AIDS, you can better guard your health and minimize the impact of living with the virus on yourself or those you care about. HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. The virus compromises the body's ability to handle disease and causes AIDS.

This is a slow process, and positive people may not have symptoms for over a decade.