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QUALITY FIRST

Cases reported increase each year

Doctor upset by students' view on VD

by CINDY GEE
Battalion Reporter
Jane Doe walked into the doctor's office and told him she thought she had VD. She wasn't worried. She had had it before, had taken her penicillin and had forgotten about it. As long as she took her birth control pills, she felt safe. It didn't matter if she picked up a disease or passed it to someone else along the way.

Dr. C.B. Goswick Jr., director of the Beutel Health Center at Texas A&M University, said this is the attitude of many of the four or five students a day that the center treats for venereal disease.

"Most of the students seem to take it in stride," he said. "It's a little bit disturbing. They don't seem to get too upset about it."

"The basic problem that we're dealing with is students are more permissive in their sexual behavior. They're more active sexually. I imagine some people say, 'Look, I'm doing this for my own pleasure anyway. If I get something, I know it's treatable. I'll go over there to the health center.'"

Goswick, who has been at Texas A&M for seven years, said the University does not have any more of a problem than other universities its size, but there is still a definite problem.

D.L. Wilson, a public health technician for the Brazos County area, said people don't think gonorrhea is very dangerous because it's so common. He said gonorrhea cannot kill a person like syphilis, but it can cause many problems if untreated.

In addition to gonorrhea and syphilis, there are 12 other sexually transmittable diseases including: non-gonococcal urethritis, trichomoniasis, genital herpes, genital warts and lice.

A recent article in the Consultant Medical Journal said seven of these

Some women don't have any symptoms with trichomoniasis, but many experience itching, pain during urination and a grayish discharge. Yet, men seldom experience the symptoms, Goswick said.

Gonorrhea is nothing new; it seems to be an everyday thing, he said. The increasing popularity of oral sex, however, has created an increase in the occurrence of gonococcal pharyngitis, an article in the Consultant Medical Journal said.

Gonococcal Pharyngitis is the result of someone having oral sex with a male who has gonorrhea. Kissing a person who has gonorrhea or syphilis sores on the lips or oral cavity will transmit the disease as well, the article said.

Perhaps a reason for the increase in venereal diseases is that more women are using birth control pills, which provide no protection against venereal disease. A condom is the only way to prevent skin to skin contact.

Wilson, who interviews people in this area with venereal diseases to find out who they've had contact with, said syphilis has risen steadily in Brazos County from 18 reported cases in 1976 to 63 in 1979. And this year, he said he has already seen an increase.

Wilson said more and more people are going to public health clinics to be treated because of rising medical costs. As a result, he said it costs the state about \$7 to treat each case. That would mean the state spent about \$2,500 to treat the 453 reported

cases of gonorrhea in Brazos County last year.

Patients can usually be cured in one treatment, he said, but they must return in a week for a test to make sure. At that time, they are interviewed to find out whom they've had contact with.

Wilson said in 1950 there were only 3,000 reported cases of syphilis in the United States. Now, he said, there are 6,000 cases in the state of Texas alone. "Maybe it's because people have more sex partners now," he said.

It is hard to make any assumptions about venereal disease statistics because the population has grown and better records are kept now. Records for the Brazos County area show syphilis has increased steadily, while gonorrhea fluctuates.

From 1976 to 1979 there has been a 10 percent increase in population and a 65 percent increase in gonorrhea.

Goswick said the student health center has particular problems

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ing out the contacts of married couples or boyfriends and girlfriends, he said.

"We get them in and say 'Look, one of you has gonorrhea and I didn't just spontaneously get it,' he said. 'We ask them who's been messing around.'"

Goswick said he would like to convey to the students that venereal diseases are preventable with little effort. But students who suspect they have a venereal disease should get it treated right away.

"We don't try to preach," he said, "because it could turn them off, and they might fail to get treated the next time. You can't be too strong judging them. You've got to sort of think like they think and realize their basic attitudes are different from yours."

With the increased use of birth control pills among women and the "free sex" attitude of many, people must be aware that their chances of contracting a venereal disease are greater. However, if contracted, they can be treated easily and relatively inexpensively.

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