

SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly



Blood tests lessen chances of getting one form of AIDS

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — With testing fully under way for blood donors' exposure to the deadly AIDS virus, a top federal expert said Wednesday, "We've pretty much solved the problems of transfusion-related AIDS."

Dr. James Curran, chief of the AIDS branch at the federal Centers for Disease Control, acknowledged that since the disease develops very slowly, cases contracted through past transfusions could be showing up for years to come.

But he and other experts at a National Institutes of Health conference said the apparent success of pre-donation blood tests begun last spring should relieve any fears Americans might have had about getting the disease through transfused blood.

The great majority of U.S. AIDS cases still involve homosexual males and intravenous drug users, but nearly 2 percent of about 12,000 diagnosed cases have been blamed on transfusions from people who have the disease or have been exposed to the virus. About half the victims of the actual disease have died.

AIDS — acquired immune deficiency syndrome — destroys the body's ability to resist infection. No one at the conference was willing to estimate the likelihood of someone who has AIDS antibodies — showing exposure to the virus — actually contracting the disease, though studies have suggested the risk is relatively small. The pre-donation blood tests do not test for the disease itself.

In tests so far, only about two prospective blood donors in every 1,000 have shown exposure — and therefore at least the potential of spreading it. And different tests run on some in that minority of people have suggested many of their results were "false positives," officials from the Food and Drug Administration and

the American Red Cross said. The likelihood of many such false alarms raises the question of when people with positive test results should or should not be notified.

Dr. Walter Dowdle, director of the center for infectious diseases at the Centers for Disease Control, said, "To focus on the false positives is really not appropriate here."

He said that only a few months ago many of the same officials were gathered in the same auditorium to announce approval of the first tests, not knowing what the results would be.

"My feeling right now is really quite a high," he said. False positives, though something to be worked on, "are a very small price to pay for the sensitivity" of tests required to catch nearly all potential sources of the disease in transfused blood, Dowdle said.

Challenger

Researchers on shuttle probe sun's eruptions

Associated Press

SPACE CENTER, Houston — Scientists aboard Challenger on Wednesday probed massive eruptions on the sun, mapped distant star fields, and sampled the invisible bow wave of the space shuttle, but they again failed to repair a \$60 million celestial pointing device.

With delicate instruments focused on targets both near and far, the ship cast a wide net of scientific curiosity in its low orbit about the Earth, and made a rich catch that delighted experts on the ground, mission officials said.

Three solar telescopes on Challenger focused on awesome nuclear explosions, called prominences, on the surface of the sun. These explosions spew huge amounts of radiation, which can affect the Earth's weather and radio communications.

Scientists said an analysis of the chemical ratios detected on the sun, which is a medium-size star, may provide fundamental evidence on the "big bang" theory of the origin of the universe and the birth of stars.

An X-ray telescope focused on more distant stars, the clusters of Virgo and Centaurus, and mission scientist Eugene W. Urban said the instrument gathered "very good information" on the radiation spewed out from those massive star fields. The goal is to map the sources of celestial X-rays.

A small satellite called the plasma detection package spent hours suspended from the end of Challenger's robot arm, gathering measurements of the invisible ripples in the ionosphere caused by the passage of the shuttle.

Later, the satellite will be released from the arm and Challenger will dance in a full circle about the small free-flying craft. Instruments on the satellite will detect the electromagnetic disturbances caused by the shuttle, measuring the movement of electrons and protons about the spacecraft.

Clouding the success of most of the science instruments in the orbiting lab was the continued failure to repair a broken telescope-pointing device. The aiming system is designed to precisely focus four of Challenger's telescopes on specific solar targets.

Astronaut-astronomer Karl Henize fed a new computer program into the pointing device and twice coaxed it into locking onto the sun, but then it went back to aimless drifting.

"We lost the track on the bore-sight and also on the right tracker," said Henize. "Evidently the centering has not succeeded."

Another attempt two hours later brought a shout of triumph from Henize.

"Hallelujah, it looks like it's working!" he said. But seconds later, the tracker again started drifting and the disappointed astronaut said, "That hallelujah was a bit too quick, wasn't it? We got a good fine track, then lost something."

Experts said another repair attempt would be made later using new computer instructions.

NASA scientists are anxious to verify the use of the German-made pointing device because it is to be used next year in a mission to study Halley's Comet.

Relatives of hostages urge talks with Lebanese

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Relatives of Americans kidnapped in Lebanon urged the White House on Wednesday to seek direct talks with the seven hostages' captors if efforts through intermediaries do not bring their quick release.

"We welcome the continuation of quiet diplomacy but feel it can be supplemented by additional action," John Jenco, a nephew of the Rev. Lawrence Martin Jenco, told reporters.

Jenco read a statement on behalf of eight members of the families of four hostages, who met for an hour and 10 minutes with Robert C. McFarlane, President Reagan's national security adviser.

"A direct dialogue with the captors should be attempted if the success from intermediaries is not in the immediate future," he said.

But Jenco and Peggy Say, sister of hostage Terry Anderson, said the family members received no assurance that the administration knows

where their relatives are being held or by whom.

Say said the relatives hoped that a public statement that the administration was willing to talk directly to the kidnappers might flush something out from the captors.

There was no immediate comment from the White House, but Say said McFarlane indicated administration officials would consider the relatives' proposal.

Jenco said, "He (McFarlane) has given us reason to believe that there

are parties involved who have been doing things in the Lebanese community that could be useful."

On Tuesday, Say was critical of the government's insistence on quiet diplomacy, saying, "We're asking the administration to stop being spectators on this issue and start being participants."

After Wednesday's meeting, however, both she and Jenco spoke with more favor of the White House position.

Jenco said, "We have brought the

issue to City Hall, and they have listened."

Say said, "We came here to have our voice heard and I feel that we have accomplished this."

The New York Times reported Wednesday that most of the seven hostages were believed held by a family of Shiite Moslem fundamentalists seeking the release of an imprisoned relative in Kuwait.

Fares of some airlines to change this month

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Several of the nation's big airlines plan to change their fare structures later this month in a move expected to raise ticket prices for many passengers.

But some observers said Wednesday that the strong presence of discount carriers like People Express and Continental Airlines leaves doubt about whether the increases will stick.

The move was started last week by the nation's largest carrier, United Airlines, which announced plans to use a fare system that ties the cost of a ticket to the mileage of the flight.

United's chief rival, American Airlines, said it too would adopt most of the changes planned by

United beginning Aug. 17. Trans World Airlines and Pan American World Airways said they also planned to adopt the new system on many routes where they compete with United and American.

While the new system will result in some lower fares, airline officials estimate that fares on the average will climb between 3 percent and 5 percent.

The change represents another attempt by the airlines to curb price wars that frequently have erupted since the industry was deregulated in 1978.

Several major airlines — including Delta, Eastern and Republic — have not yet matched United's proposal, posing the possibility that they might undercut the higher fares.

Index of Leading Indicators up

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The government's main economic forecasting gauge rose sharply in June, posting the biggest increase in five months and spurring renewed optimism about an economic rebound in the second half of the year.

The Commerce Department said Wednesday that its Index of Leading Indicators jumped 1 percent in June, following three months of lackluster performance.

At the White House, this performance was hailed as "ringing economic news" and many private analysts agreed that the increase was heartening.

In other good economic news, the government reported that orders to U.S. factories, boosted by heavy demand for military hardware, rose 1.9 percent in June following an even stronger 2.1 percent May gain.

The two healthy increases following three months of declines provide

evidence that demand for domestic goods is rebounding, analysts said.

The leading index is a collection of a dozen forward-pointing statistics that are supposed to signal changes in direction in the economy.

After rising for 21 consecutive months as the country pulled out of the 1981-82 recession, the index dropped sharply last June and started sending much weaker signals.

The economy turned weaker at the same time as a deteriorating trade performance depressed the U.S. manufacturing sector. The overall economy, as measured by the gross national product, advanced at a minuscule 1 percent annual rate during the first six months of the year.

The Reagan administration, which is predicting a sharp rebound in growth to an annual rate of 5 percent in coming months, greeted the

leading index as confirmation of its forecast.

Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige noted that the index has expanded at a faster pace in the past six months than it did in the last half of 1984, but he said the pace still is not strong enough to meet the administration's economic targets.

Many private economists agreed, saying that while the June rebound is correctly reflecting an economic upturn, the rebound is likely to be a modest one.

"While the indicators point to a rebound in the economy, much of the increased demand will be channeled into imports rather than reflected in higher domestic output," said Jerry Jasinowski, chief economist for the National Association of Manufacturers.

He predicted the GNP would rise at a moderate 2.5 percent rate in the current July-September quarter.

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