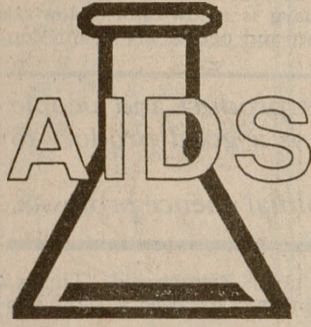


State and Local

2 researchers at A&M develop method to make AIDS vaccine

By Larissa-Starr Smith
Reporter



Graphic by M. Rohsner

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A Texas A&M professor and a former A&M student developed the technique used in manufacturing the first acquired immune deficiency syndrome vaccine approved by the federal government for testing in humans.

Distinguished Professor of Entomology Dr. Max Summers and Dr. Dale Smith, an A&M graduate, developed the technique at the Texas Agriculture Experiment Station.

MicroGeneSys Inc. in West Haven, Conn., used the technique to manufacture the acquired immune deficiency syndrome vaccine, Vax-Hiv-1. The technique is called baculovirus expression system. The vaccine is made from a gene on the protein coat of the AIDS virus.

Smith, director of molecular biology at MicroGeneSys, said, "The vaccine stimulates the body to pro-

but the actual testing will not begin until October because there is a series of tests that must be done on the volunteers before the vaccine is tested.

Presently, MicroGeneSys does not know whether the vaccine will prevent or cure AIDS. The testing at NIAID is only the first step toward answering this question.

"If the vaccine were to work, it would prevent an individual from getting the establishment of the virus infection," Smith said.

The purpose of this phase-one trial is not to determine whether the vaccine works to prevent against the infection, but to determine whether the vaccine will elicit an immune response. Phase two, which will be conducted at a later day, is to optimize the dosage, Smith said.

"Not until the phase-three trial is reached can we assess whether the vaccine is actually preventing infection," Smith said.

The only expected side effects of the vaccine are soreness, redness

and mild inflammation at the site of injection.

"There is a very remote possibility that an individual would have an allergic reaction and some precautions are being taken so that an individual would get immediate attention," Smith said. "We do not know that the vaccine works better than any other because there is no easy means for us, at MicroGeneSys, to compare our vaccine with anyone else's."

"It works well enough in animals in terms of an ability to stimulate an immune response to produce certain kinds of antibodies."

"The vaccine is expected to prove to be safe, to illicit an immune response and to make a neutralizing antibody to protect cells from infection."

He added that the ability to protect people from the virus will take many years; however, the tests conducted at NIAID will tell more quickly whether the antibodies produced can protect human white blood cells from being infected by the AIDS virus.

Bullock declares plan to enter Texas race for state's No. 2 spot

AUSTIN (AP) — State Comptroller Bob Bullock, a Democrat who once wanted to be governor, announced Thursday that he intends to run for lieutenant governor in 1990, a position held for the past 14 years by Bill Hobby.

Bullock, 58, was in South Texas bird hunting and not immediately available to comment, said his spokesman, Tony Proffitt.

Hobby, a Democrat, announced July 27 that he would not seek political office in 1990, the last full year of his current four-year term.

Asked about the timing of the announcement for a race that is still three years away, Bullock's spokesman said, "Everyone else seems to be declaring for their races."

Proffitt said Bullock has won a good reputation during his tenure as comptroller.

"He's been comptroller since 1975," he said. "We've got a good

agency, a good department. It's won national awards. I think he wants another challenge."

He also noted that Bullock had served in the House and been secretary of state under Gov. Preston Smith before being elected comptroller.

"He was a member of the Legislature," Proffitt said. "His interest lies more in the practical, legislative side than it does in the policy-making of the governor's office."

He also said Bullock had "gotten some encouragement from people since Hobby made his announcement."

Bullock had said on election day 1982 that he would run for governor in 1986 but later withdrew as a candidate.

"Frankly, there was no great public clamor for my services as governor," Bullock said in July 1984. "If I were looking for a draft, I think I can now quit waiting."

Clinic director tells A&M employees about HMO benefits

By Mary-Lynne Rice
Staff Writer

Approximately 25 Texas A&M employees and retirees attended an information session Thursday night to learn about health insurance options and coverage offered by Scott & White Health Maintenance Organization's faculty and staff health plan.

Ron Gay, administrative director of Scott & White's Bryan-College Station clinic, answered questions about the health plan and explained its premiums, coverage and benefits, comparing it to other health plans offered to A&M employees.

"We want to answer some of the ques-

tions, clear up some of the misconceptions and confusion about what joining an HMO may mean to you," Gay said.

"An HMO does restrict access to health care — you have to use Scott & White doctors," he said. "But we do some things for you in return for that." There are no claim forms to fill out, no annual deductibles and limited out-of-pocket expenses, he said.

A&M employees who subscribe to the health plan will see a 3 percent premium increase from last year. But another A&M health plan, covered by the Lincoln National insurance company, will increase its rates by 41 percent, Gay said.

Monthly charges for one-person cover-

age will be \$77.56. The employee's coverage plus one dependent will cost \$155.12 per month and coverage for families will cost \$224.14 monthly. The state contributes \$100 per month to the family coverage.

Children of employees can be covered under the health plan until age 19, or until age 25 for unmarried students.

Retirees can continue to use the health plan without reduction of coverage or increase of premiums. Scott & White will bill Medicare directly. "This coordination of benefits helps keep your costs down," Gay said. "We make the other guys pay."

In the case of spouses with different cov-

erage policies, Scott & White coordinates its coverage with the other HMO's.

Because the Scott & White clinic has no pre-existing condition clause that sets age or health requirements, Gay said, no applicant can be refused care. "We are regulated by both the state and federal government," he said. "It is illegal for us to deny anyone access to the plan once the group (A&M) has accepted us. So regardless of your health or physical condition, you may join the Scott & White health plan."

Most medical expenses are covered under Scott & White's health plan without deductibles or out-of-pocket costs, including

major medical care at St. Joseph's and Humana hospitals.

Under Scott & White's health plan, there is no charge for professional services including office visits, immunizations, X-ray and laboratory services, nutritional counseling, allergy treatment, eye and ear exams, outpatient surgery and obstetrical care.

Also included are short-term physical and occupational therapy, intermittent home health care and mental health services.

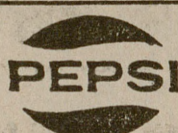
The application period to join Scott & White's HMO ends Sept. 31. So far, 300 A&M employees have filed applications.

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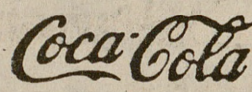
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