

State and Local

Laboratory process developed at A&M may become AIDS test

From Staff and Wire Reports
A laboratory process developed at Texas A&M could become a test to determine which people exposed to AIDS actually would develop the deadly disease, an A&M researcher said Wednesday.

The procedure was developed by Dr. Luther Lindner of A&M's Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Department and Stephen R. Wechter, a former research assistant in the department.

The laboratory process has detected acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

"The research started about three and a half years ago," Lindner said. "However, it has been sitting in limbo for a year or two."

Wechter acquired sole patent rights from A&M and is continuing work on the process at a private firm in Houston.

Lindner and A&M will get a percentage of royalties from any income associated with the patent.

"Since any further research will be conducted by a private

"If we're right, it (a new laboratory procedure) is going to make an explosive impact in the AIDS field."

Stephen R. Wechter, former Texas A&M research assistant

firm, it probably won't bring in any other research money into A&M," Lindner said.

The new test is promising, but needs additional research to confirm early results, Lindner said.

"Certainly, it has the potential for providing a useful test," he said.

Lindner said the process appears to show whether a person exposed to the AIDS virus will develop a full-blown case of AIDS.

The process could develop into an alternative to current testing procedures, he said.

Whether such a new procedure actually would be any better or definitely show who will get AIDS has not yet been determined, Lindner added.

"The first thing it is aimed at is developing a test," he said.

"Whether other things will come out of it remains to be seen," he said. "More testing is going to have to be done before we know how reliable it is."

Wechter shares Lindner's belief that additional research is needed, but Wechter is convinced they are on the threshold of an important development.

"If we're right, it is going to make an explosive impact in the AIDS field," Wechter said.

The process is based on Lindner and Wechter's studies of a disease similar to AIDS that occurs naturally in monkeys.

The monkey's symptoms matched human AIDS symptoms closely except for the presence of

the AIDS-related human T-cell leukemia-lymphoma virus, which was missing from the monkeys.

"We're obviously detecting something other than HTLV III," Wechter said.

"It may be a new virus," Wechter said. "It may be a product of the disease."

"We just don't know at this point."

Lindner said identifying the unknown factor should be one of the major aims of future research.

Whatever "it" is, it appears to provide reliable information about AIDS in humans.

In double-blind laboratory tests, Lindner and Wechter were able to detect AIDS in samples from people with no other positive signs and track the disease's progress from their test samples.

Wechter says additional research eventually could make their process a starting point for a three-pronged attack on AIDS—a vaccine to help prevent the disease, a screening tool and a drug to treat the disease after infection.

Cisneros will explain shared power system in U.S. to Gorbachev

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Mayor Henry Cisneros said Wednesday he will tell Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev how American cities, unlike their Soviet counterparts, share power with the national government.

Cisneros, past president of the National League of Cities, said he is one of five leaders nationwide asked by Vice President George Bush to attend a breakfast today at the Soviet Embassy. Cisneros is in his fourth term as mayor of the nation's ninth largest city.

"I basically will give a description of how local government fits into the big picture and how we build our country," Cisneros said. "Local government is the level that provides education."

"Local government is the one that provides the infrastructure for ports, docks, airports and streets."

"To a country that is a centralized country, as the Soviet Union is — centrally planned, centrally programmed — I suspect this idea of decentralized political responsibility out across the country would be interesting and important."

He said his presentation is expected to last about five minutes and that he will return to San Antonio this afternoon.

Cisneros said he welcomed Bush's invitation as a bipartisan effort

aimed at getting the Soviet leader acquainted with the United States.

"I want to share with our guests my belief that American cities are wonderful institutions that reflect our diversity and strength," he said. "In America, we have learned that it is this very diversity wherein our strength lies."

"Even though we do have some problems, our cities are living proof of the success of the American way of life."

Cisneros said he has read about Gorbachev and respects the Soviet leader for attempting to change Soviet lifestyle.

"Indeed, one would have to say he is one of the most capable people on the scene today and I look forward to meeting him and making a short assessment of my own of his attributes," he said.

The White House said the guest list today will include Cisneros; Bush; Secretary of State George Shultz; former Rep. Cooper Evans of Iowa; Gov. John Sununu of New Hampshire; high school principal Robert Brooks, who has a strong Russian program in his school, and Dr. Mary Good.

Cisneros did not immediately know much more about Brooks or Good. Cisneros' presentation to Gorbachev comes at a time when he has made it clear he does not want to seek higher office.

Judge: Firms using insurance to pay damages do not avoid punishment

AUSTIN (AP) — Corporations do not unfairly avoid punishment by carrying insurance coverage that pays punitive damages for them in liability lawsuits, a state appeals court ruled Wednesday.

The 3rd Court of Appeals rejected arguments that such insurance coverage allows companies to "shift the burden" and cause higher premiums for "innocent members of society who purchase insurance."

The decisions evolved from two liability cases in which insurance companies contested whether they had to pay the punitive damages awarded against their policyholders.

Punitive damages, in addition to damages for actual losses, can be ordered as a punishment and deterrent.

In one of the cases, jurors ordered Rawlings Sporting Goods Co. Inc. to pay \$750,000 in punitive damages to a football player who was not notified of the limitations of a Rawlings football helmet. The other case involved \$1 million in punitive damages resulting from injuries caused by a defective scaffold.

Insurance companies "argue that allowing (the corporations) to insure themselves against an award of punitive damages thwarts the principal

purposes behind punitive damages — punishment and deterrence," Justice Jimmy Carroll said in the 3rd Court's unanimous opinion.

He said a 1962 decision by another court seems to support the insurance companies' argument. That opinion said "insurance against criminal fines or penalties would be void as violative of public policy."

But the 3rd Court said, "We find no public policy against allowing insurance coverage against punitive damages."

Confronted by the question of whether it is fair to make all insurance purchasers help cover the cost

of punitive damages, Carroll said, "It is important to note that inability to obtain such coverage will inevitably be passed on to the consumers of its products, who are also innocent."

Carroll also said "less well-established" corporations could be put out of business if they cannot get insurance against punitive damages.

"The instigating event may arise from only a single incident of gross negligence on the part of an agent," he said. "A fine line separates conduct that justifies imposition of punitive damages from conduct that does not."

Krenek approved as editor of Battalion for Spring '88

Sue Krenek was officially appointed as Spring 1988 editor of *The Battalion* by Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Donald McDonald Monday.

Krenek, 20, a senior journalism major from Deer Park, was nominated by the Student Publications Board Nov. 24. Nominations by the board are subject to the approval of the provost before they become official.

"All three of the candidates appear to be very well prepared and

highly qualified, and I am sure that the decision was a difficult one," McDonald wrote in a memo approving the recommendation of Krenek.

Krenek has worked as a *Battalion* opinion page editor, copy editor, assistant news editor, news editor and part-time staff writer. She also is working for the *AggieLand* as a copy editor and design assistant.

Krenek and the rest of the Spring 1988 *Battalion* staff took over the paper's operations Sunday.

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