

Oral sex more dangerous than previously thought

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Oral sex, long regarded by many gay men as a low-risk practice, appears to be a surprisingly frequent way of spreading AIDS.

A study released Tuesday found that oral sex was probably the cause of eight percent of recent HIV infections among a group of homosexual men examined in San Francisco.

In the past, there have been occasional reports of people apparently catching HIV orally. But health investigators have had difficulty being certain, since gay men who have oral sex also may engage in other, riskier sex practices, such as anal intercourse.

Now diagnostic tests allow doctors to narrow down the timing of HIV infections. They were used in the latest study, described as the most definitive on the subject to date.

The work was conducted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention and the University of California at San Francisco, and was presented in San Francisco at a scientific conference.

"While oral sex may still be safer than anal intercourse or vaginal intercourse, it is not without risk

and perhaps has higher risk than we would have expected otherwise," Dr. Helene Gayle, the CDC's AIDS chief, said.

The researchers sought to learn the means of infection in 102 gay and bisexual men who had recently caught HIV. When all other possible means of infection were ruled out, oral sex turned out to be the only risk behavior in eight of these men. Most of them said they thought oral sex had little or no risk.

Because of the strict criteria used, the real number of cases resulting from oral sex may actually have been higher. For instance, two men said they had oral sex but not anal sex. But they also said

they had blacked out once and could not be sure what had happened, so they were excluded from the total.

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The only safe sex is total abstinence or sex with a mutually monogamous, non-HIV-infected partner," Gayle said. "Everything else has some degree of risk. The sense that oral sex is safe sex may have been an unfortunate message."

All of the men apparently caught the virus by giving oral sex, rather than receiving it, and none used condoms.

"We know that

Gayle said she assumes that the risk of oral sex when properly using a condom is close to zero. She also said that if oral sex alone has played a large role in the spread of AIDS, that would already have become obvious during the 20 years of the epidemic.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, noted that some gay men turned to frequent unprotected oral sex after giving up anal intercourse.

"A lot of us in the public health field have been saying all along to be careful of unprotected fellatio," he said. "People think the risk is low, but what's low?"

Dr. Frederick M. Hecht of San Francisco General Hospital, a co-author of the study, said anal intercourse may be 100 times riskier than oral sex. "The message is not that everyone will get infected through oral sex," he said.

Because of declines in unprotected anal intercourse, there has been a big reduction in high-risk exposure, Hecht said, but there is still plenty of low-risk exposure through oral sex without condoms,

News in Brief

Motorist rescued from avalanche

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Nine motorists were rescued by a state police helicopter Tuesday after spending the night in their cars, trapped by huge avalanches that buried a highway.

The travelers, who had kept in touch with rescuers by cellular phone as they waited along the Seward Highway, were flown out in three groups and taken to a diner for breakfast. They were in good condition.

"We ate everything they had in the restaurant, and now we're starting all over again," Darwin Peterson said. "I told my wife when we get back home, I'm not going as far as the post office for the rest of the winter."

Some of the people wrapped up for the night in sleeping bags, while others were in a van that had a propane heater. They spent the time playing cribbage, getting acquainted

and talking to troopers by phone. Most Alaskans carry warm clothing, sleeping bags and survival gear when they travel long distances in the winter.

Blizzard conditions have prevented rescuers from dropping supplies such as food and blankets overnight, when temperatures dipped into the low teens. The rescuers had to wait for the weather to clear to reach the motorists.

Coal train derails killing 15-year-old

BLOOMINGTON, Md. (AP) — A CSX coal train was running downhill at more than twice the recommended speed when it derailed and crashed into a house at about 55 mph, killing a 15-year-old boy, a federal investigator said Monday.

Investigators will interview crew members and use computer simulation to determine why the 80-car

train was going so fast Sunday and what caused the derailment, Russell Quimby, a rail safety engineer with the National Transportation Safety Board, said.

He said the investigation will focus on the three-member crew, weather conditions and possible brake failure or other mechanical problems.

It was snowing early Sunday morning when 76 coal hoppers derailed along 2.4 miles of track near the Maryland-West Virginia border, about 130 miles west of Baltimore. The stretch has a recommended speed of 25 mph, Quimby said.

Military training for gay policy approved

WASHINGTON (AP) — For the first time, the nation's military services have written guidelines to ensure that the Pentagon's "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays is im-

plemented fairly and uniformly. Defense Secretary William Cohen said Tuesday he has approved

new training programs for each of the services, including guidelines for investigating harassment or threats against individuals based on allegations of homosexuality.

As a matter of policy, commanders are not to use complaints of such harassment or threats as a reason to investigate the complaining person but is supposed to investigate the source of the threat or harassment.

"These plans make it very clear ... that there is no room for harassment or threats in the military," Cohen said in a written statement. The Pentagon also announced

Tuesday the number of discharges from the military in the fiscal year ended last Sept. 30 fell to 1,034 from 1,145 in the year-earlier period.

Spokesperson Kenneth Bacon said 83.5 percent of discharges resulted from statements by service members that they were homosexual.

Under the Clinton administration's policy, gays may serve in the military as long as they keep their sexual orientation to themselves. If they state that they are homosexual, they are supposed to be removed from the service.

Cohen instructed the services to develop new training guidelines last December amid widening criticism that administration policy on gays in the military was not working.

The criticism sharpened after a court-martial in which an Army private was convicted of murdering a gay soldier harassed with the knowledge of his superiors.



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Vonnegut injured in house fire

NEW YORK (AP) — "The House of Five" novelist Kurt Vonnegut Jr. was injured in a fire at his New York City home Monday after a fire at his house.

Vonnegut, 77, suffered a minor injury to his face in a fire that broke out in the floor study of his East 48th Street brownstone. The author of satirical and darkly humorous novels — was home with his wife and daughter.

A Fire Department spokesman said the fire may have started in the kitchen. Vonnegut Jr. was in critical condition Sunday night in a hospital. Many people have as for this location.

Vonnegut, 77, suffered a minor injury to his face in a fire that broke out in the floor study of his East 48th Street brownstone. The author of satirical and darkly humorous novels — was home with his wife and daughter.

The fire was reported Sunday and was brought under control in 20 minutes. It caused damage to one room. Fire officials said Vonnegut Jr. was in critical condition Sunday night in a hospital. Many people have as for this location.

They credited a neighbor, Stackelberg, with saving his wife, celebrity photographer Krementz, and their daughter, 17, from serious harm.

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Truth obscured

On Dec. 13, after tearing through hal China like the proverbial bull in a shop, Imperial Japanese Army captured the city of Nanking and for three months of rape, torture and murder. The mass agenda of who one In a perfect world wearing a white ha any discussion of t spectacularly know has reached levels perhaps only by th The Japanese govt downplayed all Jav while the Chinese have supported the Perhaps most c insistence of many including figures i Ishihara, governor no massacre at Nanking at all. The lies on both sides must stop before history is doomed to bear the repetition of these crimes.

The efforts of the Chinese to memorialize the dead of Nanking (and more importantly for the Chinese, to blame deaths) are being of otherwise reputly high death tolls ures like this are a can be kindly labe better description "biased" or perha

The Chinese a the official Allied The Allies counte highly suspect so For example, t the banks of the Y survivor Lu Su at a local peasant, re were bound in pa machine-gunned, and then set on fi hid in a cave, whi count. The fact th count that well th jured and on the r to trust his numb plagued by simil and the Chinese l face value.

A relief organ said it buried 110 month period. In this time, they cla 105,000 victims. would have had t