

# Aids

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## Essay No. 01

Aids are a deadly disease for which so far, no foolproof treatment has been discovered. Of course, great research is going on in this field. It is said that a vaccine has now been discovered but how far it is successful, is still doubtful. But its effect in saving the new born babies is said to have been proved to an acceptable measure.

The best safeguard against this devastating disease is the precautions that we should take and bear in mind. The first reason now a, a gets AIDS is through infected blood transfused into his body. So, if we need transfusion of blood for any reason, we should make sure that it is AIDS free and has conclusively been trusted as such.

It is quite understandable that we should use only disposable syringes if we want to have an injection. A non-disposable syringe might have got infected.

Another reason for the spread of AIDS is unprotected sex. We must take care that we are never to indulge in unprotected sex. The best thing is that we should never have extra marital relations.

If a person has at all developed AIDS, we should not discard him like a hot potato. He should be shown due regard and affection and we should take measures that we can for his comfort and recovery if possible.

We should not fight shy of getting our blood tested for HIV. It is done at nominal rates and even free at certain places. In case of HIV positive, we should take the counsel, help and guidance of experts in the matter.

## Essay No.02

### **Aids: The Worldwide Epidemic**

AIDS or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is a dreaded disease caused by a virus. The disease leads to the total loss of resistance to viral and bacterial infection. The disease mainly spreads through homosexual and heterosexual contacts. Presence of virus in the body is detected by a simple blood test-known as ELISA test. Researchers are trying to find an effective drug and a vaccine which would prevent the spread of the disease. There is a big controversy as regards the origin of AIDS. The first AIDS patient

appeared in 1979 in New York. Now the disease has spread virtually to every country in the world not excluding India.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a dreaded disease which leads to the total loss of resistance to viral and bacterial infection that is naturally there in the human body. The disease is caused by a virus which the American scientists have called HTLV-III (Human T-cell Lymphotropic-associated Virus three). The French scientists have named it LAV (Lymphadenopathy Associated-Virus). The WHO names it as HIV (Human Immune-deficiency Virus). The virus selectively affects helper T-lymphocytes which play a vital role in the immune responses at our bodies to light infections.

Following symptoms may appear single or in combination with others or may be altogether suppressed: significant and unexplainable loss of weight cough with thick sputum persistent watery diarrhea swollen glands in armpits groin and sides of neck oral and anal ulcers persistent feeling of tiredness reduction in the number of white blood cells red blood cells and blood platelets.

According to a report published in the British magazine "Nature" the incurable virus incubation period may last as 15 years. According to U.S estimates viral incubation times ranged from five 10 years.

This dreaded disease mainly spreads through homosexual and heterosexual contacts as in the case of American Catholic Clergy. It also Spreads through the infected syringes and needles used by drug addicts and through the clinical transfusions of infected blood.

Presence of virus in the body is detected by a simple blood test known as ELISA test (Enzyme Linked Immune Solvent Assay Test). Positive results of ELISA test Can be confirmed by other tests (Western blot test immunofluorescence test). In India Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is the only organization to have facilities for ELISA test and the Western blot test.

The disease is incurable. But researchers are trying to find an effective but safe drug and a vaccine which would prevent the spread of the disease. A number of drugs have been considered. Dideoxy nucleosides; Azidothymidine (AZT) and Ribavarin appear most satisfactory. AZT is already being administered to patients in the Daniel Zangury which is ready for trial. The trial will have to be done on human beings since animals do not respond to the AIDS virus as humans do.

Scientists at the National Institute of Virology at Pune have discovered a particle which may shed light on several aspects of AIDS. The NIV is engaged in studies on AIDS and is the first laboratory engaged by ICMR to undertake investigation.

The first AIDS patient appeared in 1979 in New York. However, it was only in 1983 that a French research team of the famed Pasteur institute of Paris headed by Dr Luc Montagnier succeeded in isolating the virus from a French AIDS patient who had got infected in New York. Three months later a US research group identified this virus in an American patient.

There is a big controversy as regards the origin of AIDS. Reports appearing in the Western media have claimed that AIDS could have its origin in Africa. The US magazine Newsweek of December 1986 maintained that 50000 people have died in 11 nations of that continent since the first appearance of AIDS virus. According to a London-based newspaper report also there would be 80 million virus carriers in black Africa by 1990. Dr. Jonathan Mann Director of the WHO AIDS Control Programme has however described these reports as “greatly exaggerated.”

The Western media has cited some research reports to assert that the disease has come from the African “green monkey.” But the mainstream of scientific opinion maintains that the AIDS virus “must be an artificial product the result of a gene manipulation. Eminent British scientist John Seale holds that AIDS virus was produced artificially in a laboratory. Robert Stracher an American scientist holds the same opinion. The French bio physicians Prof. Jacob Segal and Dr. Lilli Segal point out that the U.S. army opened its first laboratory for gene manipulation of pathogens for military use at Fort Detrick Maryland in 1977. The first AIDS patient appeared in the USA two years later.

AIDS the Segals stress has resulted from failure in biological warfare research in the US. They say that the virus produced in the laboratory was tested on prisoners. But as the incubation period of the virus is slow and stretched over a minimum of two years the military researchers released the prisoners when no effect of incubation was found in their bodies. These people later spread the disease.

The Guardian of London on October 27 1986 quoted a US Defense Department testimony before the Senate Appropriation Committee in 1969 which said “Within the next five or ten years it would be possible to make a new infective micro-organism which could differ in certain important respects from any known disease-causing organism”. Most important of these is that it might be refractory to” the immunological and therapeutic properties upon which we depend to maintain our relative freedom from infectious diseases the testimony added. The AIDS virus

undoubtedly has all the characteristics mentioned above. Could it be that AIDS originated in the US military lab?

According to World Health Organization experts AIDS has spread to virtually every country in the world and at least five million people are thought to be infected by the fatal disease. "We are still at the historic moment-which is to say at the beginning of a worldwide epidemic whose dimensions we are unable of predict" said Dr. Jonathan Mann the American Director of WHO's special programme on AIDS.

In Western Europe AIDS was discovered in 1981; in South Africa and Trinidad in 1983 in Japan in 1984 and so on. Eighty-eight of the cases reported in Nairobi are that of prostitutes at tourist centers frequented by Americans. A number of cases had also been reported from South Korea where US military personnel were stationed in a big way.

The sharp rise in India's AIDS cases from a mere 2.4 per cent (per thousand among those tested) in 1985-86 to a staggering 15.9 percent in 1990 has occurred not without a timely warning from WHO. The WHO had singled out India and Thailand as the two most AIDS prone countries in South East Asian region. Following this warning the Indian Council of Medical Research formed an AIDS committee in 1986 to advise on steps to tackle the disease. The Government promised to set up surveillance centers for detecting Human Immuno Deficiency virus infection in addition to 29 zonal blood testing centres. Five separate AIDS management clinics were set up at New Delhi Srinagar Calcutta Madras and Bombay. The authorities have now shifted their emphasis from surveillance to educating the public on preventive measures and creating awareness about the disease. Since the target group of AIDS patients is the STD (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) patients the STD control programme has been further intensified during the Eighth plan period by: (i) establishment of new STD clinics and augmenting the existing ones (ii) providing free essential drugs to the STD clinics and (iii) opening more survey-cum- epidemiological units in states. WHO has also been asked to assist in implementation of the schemes for prevention and control of AIDS in India.

The Government is to make it compulsory for all foreign students seeking admission to Indian Universities to undergo medical tests to check for the dreaded AIDS disease. As stated by the Minister for Human Resource Development in Rajya Sabha in March 1987 "we have to be in step with the world and not out of it" explaining that many countries were tightening up the process.