All the News That's Fit to Zip...

June 1, 2002 By Walter Armstrong

Ninth Retrovirus Conference, Seattle, February -- A French survey found that only **one-half of all HIVer deaths** are caused by *LE SIDA*. The top HIV-related killers are **CMV, PCP and toxo; hep C, cancer and cardio disease** are the non-AIDS villains. And those dastardly drug side effects? They caused a mere 1 percent of *positifs* to pass -- less than **alcohol or accidents** (Though "cardio" raises questions)... The death rate of British Columbia PWAs with CD4s below the telltale 200 was twice that of those with 200-plus -- regardless of drug regimen used... Johns Hopkins researchers found that in **HIVers over 50**, those on HAART died at about the same rate as young'uns on the meds, while untreated golden oldies **died twice as fast** as their younger peers... A small study of London HIVers found that **those who tested "late"** -- within a year of a full-blown AIDS diagnosis -- got **sicker faster**. Not exactly rocket science, but worth noting, since more than half of all HIVers are "late" bloomers... **In the Duh! box:** A study showing that people in the throes of **primary infection** who had high adherence to HAART saw their viral load fall to 50 copies or less in two months... **In the Huh? box:** HIVers with **lousy compliance** had a lower risk of drug resistance than the goody-two-shoes with high HAART adherence. Say what? Turns out the noncompliant don't stay on meds long enough to even develop resistance -- or to get any benefit of viral suppression... There's **good news for HIVers who start HAART** with a much-damaged immune system (below 50 CD4s). First, over three years, their average CD4 count went up to 480. Second, as CD4s rose, **the rates of OIs declined**, and prophylaxes against MAC, toxo, crypto and other nasties could often be safely stopped -- but **talk to your doctor first...** UCSF's CAPS prevention pioneers found that the rate of **unprotected anal sex among newbies** (gay men infected for one year or less) was twice as high as that of their neggie peers. One-third said that if their partner had sex *sans* condom, **they assumed the guy was negative...** The Young Men's Survey study found that of 3,500 urban homos, ages 15 to 22, **66 percent used drugs** (such as cocaine, crystal meth and ecstasy) at least once in the past six months, **30 percent did so "frequently"** and 30 percent also reported "poly-drug" use. As for condom use, **take a wild guess...** Brazilian researchers trumpeted **a first-ever case of HIV transmission by bite**. A 31-year-old epileptic, mid-seizure, **bloodily gnashed** his poor mom's arm; after 40 days and 40 nights, she tested positive, and molecular tests confirmed **viral kinship...** According to the CDC, **1 percent of the 775,000** Americans with HIV still living by December 2000 got it through **contaminated blood transfusions**; one-third were seniors, one-quarter black... Four **New York state prisons** reported a steady drop in HIV from 1988 to 2000: among guys, from 18 to 5 percent; among gals, from 18 to 14 percent. Investigators saw **a similar decline in IV-drug use... Flakiest study of the confab?** The one testing if daily phone calls reminding HIVers to take their meds improves adherence. The "surprising" finding that **Ma Bell made no difference** -- the phone arm and the placebo (no phone) arm were equally highly compliant -- suggests that

just knowing that **Big Brother is watching** ups obedient dosing.

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