French Roast

"Docs with HIV, down with your scalpels!"

May 1, 1997 By Walter Armstrong and Ronnilyn Pustil

"How did she get AIDS?" In this case, even inquiring PC minds need to pose the question.

After France's health ministry spread word that a patient got HIV from her physician during an operation, the French Order of Doctors urged all HIV positive surgeons to lay down their scalpels. "It's the moral duty of a surgeon infected by HIV to stop operating," said Dr. Jean Langlois, head of the group's public health section. "We'll recommend that such a doctor work in a general practice or administration."

Dr. Patrick Cohen claimed he got the virus from a patient he operated on in 1983, leading officials to grumble that he wasn't tested for HIV until 1994. French feds contacted 5,000 patients of Cohen, and of 986 who were tested, one woman had the virus. About 233 health care workers worldwide are believed to have been infected with HIV on the job, 37 in France. This incident marks the second time a patient is thought to have contracted HIV through a medical procedure.

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