# OOPS, They Did It Again

A trifecta of creepy bureaucratic blunders

July 1, 2005 By Jennifer Block

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**LA Lapse**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported March 11 that the federally funded Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center mistakenly treated more than 400 syphilis patients between 1999 and 2004 with control-release (CR) penicillin/bicillin instead of the intended long-acting variety. The CR insert states “not indicated for the treatment of syphilis,” but the clinic realized the error only after a patient read the label. Treatment- failure rate was reportedly unaffected. Says Peter Kerndt, STD program, “We’re hoping to learn from the experience.”

**Florida Follies**

In February, a Palm Beach County Health Department worker accidentally e-mailed a confidential list of 6,500 local PWAs to 800 department colleagues. Office techies contained the data, but less than a month later, local HIVers received anonymous letters soliciting for a bogus charity. A few weeks after that, the same health
department disclosed that 15 pages of yet another confidential PWA list went missing for two months. “They’re really not related incidents,” says department spokesperson Tim O’Connor, adding that neither list included mailing addresses. The FBI is investigating.

**DC Demerits**

The spermicide Nonoxynol-9 (N-9), once thought to help prevent HIV, has been known to heighten risk since the late ’90s. By 2000, the CDC and other health orgs worldwide had downgraded their recommendations, and last year, Durex, the world’s largest condom maker, discontinued its N-9–lubricated love gloves. But the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has refused to tweak N-9–product labeling. When pressed, an FDA spokeswoman, sounding confused and surprised, asked POZ: “Do you know what other products contain N-9?"

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