Tattoo Hullabaloo

Ohio says tattoo people with HIV

January 1, 1997 By Walter Armstrong and Faye Penn

Tattoos are a recurring motif in the epidemic, from right-wing calls for inking buttocks to in-your-face “HIV+” IDs by those who have the virus. Now the owner of an Ohio tattoo shop has been ordered to tattoo an HIV positive man after an artist there refused to do so two and a half years ago.

In April 1994, H. Edward Dobbins filed a complaint with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission after an employee of 8-Ball Tattoos in Columbus turned down his request for a tattoo when Dobbins disclosed on a routine questionnaire that he is positive.

During the subsequent investigation, shop-owner Adam Gray claimed tattoo artists-who were latex gloves and eye goggles as they inject ink into a customer’s skin with surgical-steel needles-are subject to an undue HIV risk from accidental needle sticks. However, the chance of transmission is only three to five for every 1,000 sticks with an infected needle, according to studies presented at the hearings. There have been no documented cases of HIV transmission through tattooing.

The commission found on August 29 that the artist’s refusal to tattoo Dobbins violated a state law prohibiting discrimination based on handicap in a place of public accomodation.

Gray’s employees must now tattoo any HIV positive person who enters the shop. But an “exasperated” Gray, who said he has spent $45,000 in legal fees, suggested that Dobbins would do well to patronize another shop at this point. “Can they legally require me to do a good job? Can they require me not to make it hurt?” Gray asked. “If I tattooed this guy’s chest today, it’d be coming out his back.”

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Tattoo-Hullabaloo-12413-5996