The Oral Majority

April 1, 2003 By Alex MacDonald

Score one more for no-jimmy blowjobs in the endless “Is oral sex safe?” debate. “In terms of HIV, [giving and getting] oral sex is...very, very, very low risk,” wrote San Francisco STD-prevention head Jeffrey Klausner, MD, in his December “Ask Dr. K” safe-sex column on the San Fran City Clinic’s website (www.dph.sf.ca.us/sfcityclinic). He supported this sucker’s punch by citing a new study he coauthored that “found zero new HIV infections” among oral-sex-only Frisco men. Klausner’s “very, very, very low,” of course, flies in the face of prevention officialdom’s line that oral sex is less risky than anal, but still a risk.

The study, published last November in the journal *AIDS*, HIV-tested 239 men who claimed to have been exclusively oral in the past six months; all were found to be HIV negative, even though one-third said they took semen in their mouths, one-quarter said they swallowed, and over a fifth reported giving uncovered head to partners they knew were positive. These results echo a recent Spanish finding of zero HIV infections after 19,000 reported acts of oral sex between 137 mixed-status couples. That’s a bounty of blowjobs - did people just get lucky every time? No way, according to Klausner, who says saliva likely helps inhibit HIV.

But Cornell University’s Brian Boyle, MD, cautions that these studies are too small to rule out risk: “The condom is like the seat belt of oral sex. Your chances of getting in an accident are low, but you still want to wear it.” Still, public-health pooh-bah Klausner is as official as it gets. “Enjoy oral sex,” he advised readers, mindful, no doubt, that STD rates are rising at an alarming rate, meaning that unsafe anal sex is, too.

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