A Cut-and-Dry Message

Beauty salons weave safer sex into services

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Riding a permanent wave of prevention education, the California Department of Health's new Beauty Salon and Outreach Program is talking sex at mostly African-American and Latina centers of chitchat, gossip and advice. As an extension of the salons' usual services, posters, displays and free condoms are handed out with safer-sex packets to more than 100 hair salons statewide. The bigger picture? To get customers to call the state-funded AIDS hotline to learn more about safer sex and HIV testing. "Our slogan is, 'We care as much about your health as we do about your looks,'" said Salon 21 owner Michele Moore Bell. Historical note: The first salon-based educational effort was started 12 years ago at DiAna's Hair Ego by South Carolina stylist and AIDS activist DiAna DiAna.

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