

John McCain for President (of The Gambia)

March 18, 2007 By [Shawn Decker](#)



In the last week there have been a couple of troubling stories about my pet virus, HIV. The first of which is that the President of The Gambia, Yahya Jammeh, is claiming that he has found the cure for AIDS and is dispensing it to some of the civilians in the Western African region.

It involves a plastic container- no, not a condom- that is filled with herbs. Green paste is also rubbed on the recipients ribs as they are prayed over. Now, I'm a little weary of a cure for AIDS being discovered in a place that itself sounds like an unpleasant sexually transmitted disease, but I saw a report on Anderson Cooper where some patients are actually swearing by it.

That's because, particularly in an unimaginably poor area, hope can do funny things. In the longterm, however, the risks of trading in antiretrovirals for an herb shake and a chest rub at the insistence of a leader with God complex is scary stuff. The international community is taking a closer look, but before you make fun of African leaders it's important to take note of what's happening close to home. (If you're living in America, of course.)

While on the campaign trail, John McCain name dropped one of the few dastardly characters of My Pet Virus- Dr. Tom Coburn. This is the gynecologist who says condoms don't work and was appointed to the Presidential Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS by President Bush.

Here's a snippet of the [question and answer session gone awry](#):

Reporter: "Should U.S. taxpayer money go to places like Africa to fund contraception to prevent AIDS?"

Mr. McCain: "Well I think it's a combination. The guy I really respect on this is Dr. Coburn. He believes - and I was just reading the thing he wrote- that you should do

what you can to encourage abstinence where there is going to be sexual activity. Where that doesn't succeed, than he thinks that we should employ contraceptives as well. But I agree with him that the first priority is on abstinence. I look to people like Dr. Coburn. I'm not very wise on it."

Q: "What about grants for sex education in the United States? Should they include instructions about using contraceptives? Or should it be Bush's policy, which is just abstinence?"

Mr. McCain: (Long pause) "Ahhh. I think I support the president's policy."

Q: "So no contraception, no counseling on contraception. Just abstinence. Do you think contraceptives help stop the spread of HIV?"

Mr. McCain: (Long pause) "You've stumped me."

Q: "But you would agree that condoms do stop the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Would you say: 'No, we're not going to distribute them,' knowing that?"

Mr. McCain: (Twelve-second pause) "Get me Coburn's thing, ask Weaver to get me Coburn's paper that he just gave me in the last couple of days. I've never gotten into these issues before."

Coburn's thing. *Right*. I know I'm in the AIDS/condom bubble, I don't expect everyone to be an expert on all of the issues. But this really sheds light on the fact that safe sex in this country is a joke. And how is the United States supposed to lead the rest of the world on this issues if we can't get it right at home?

As hopeless as all of this sounds, I think I have a solution to the problems addressed in this blog entry. Let's send McCain and Vice President Coburn over to The Gambia to overthrow President Jammeh. Because who needs condoms when you can have prayer, chest rubs and herbs?

Positively Yours,
Shawn