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AIDS: Children's Hospital seeing increase in cases

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"Anyone who is pregnant is sexually active and so is at risk for HIV," Petru said. "All pregnant women should be aware of their HIV status."

On Monday, Deborah Scheer, the foster mother of a 5-year-old boy in Petru's program, urged Fleming to push HIV testing for pregnant women and AZT treatment for infected women.

"Maybe Dillon wouldn't have gotten infected had that treatment been available when his biological mother was pregnant," Scheer said.

Dillon McDevitt, Scheer's foster son, was infected at birth. His biological mother, who is still alive but is quite sick, didn't know she had HIV until after she gave birth.

Scheer lives with her foster son in Oakland, and has taken care of the boy since he was 2 months old.

"I fell in love with him within the first five minutes of meeting him," she said.

Since then, she has created a full life with the brown-eyed boy — a

life of dinosaur books and daily pills, of trips to the zoo and trips to the doctor.

Dillon is one of the fortunate ones. Though he was born premature with a host of health problems, he is now relatively healthy. He runs and plays and begs to be read to. When he sees Petru, he climbs up her body like a monkey up a tree.

"We are living with HIV," Scheer said, looking across the room as her son played with a toy fire truck, "and we're doing a good job of it."

Nation's AIDS Czar Says Epidemic Isn't Relenting

S.F. activists told that young are hard hit

*By Steve Rubenstein
Chronicle Staff Writer*

Two hundred people are contracting AIDS every day, and the epidemic is "not waning," the nation's top AIDS adviser said yesterday in San Francisco.

Half the new cases involve people 23 or younger. One fourth are teenagers.

Speaking to a dozen young AIDS activists in San Francisco yesterday, Patsy Fleming, the director of the President's Office of National AIDS Policy, discounted reports that the epidemic is leveling off.

"It's not waning. It's with us, and it will continue to be with us for a long, long time," Fleming said.

Fleming, on a three-day tour of the Bay Area, is visiting AIDS treatment and outreach centers.

Yesterday she visited Peter Claver Community, a San Francisco residence for three dozen people with AIDS. She also called on the AIDS/HIV Clinic at Children's Hospital in Oakland and on Health Initiatives for Youth, a San Francisco-based program of young AIDS counselors and journalists.

At the Market Street office of Health Initiatives for Youth, Fleming said that short-sighted members of Congress are part of the AIDS problem.

"Our political system is very short term. House members are

elected for two years, and they don't think about what's going to be needed in 10 years," Fleming said.

Fleming, appointed in November by President Clinton, advises the president and Congress about AIDS and coordinates the federal AIDS program.

Tania Brown, an 18-year-old student, told Fleming that she was frustrated by her high school's refusal to offer condoms to sexually active students. Fleming urged her to speak to her school board.

"Have a serious meeting; give them some statistics," she said. "Get your facts together and tell them you want them to help save your lives. I think maybe you can get somewhere."

Wayne Davis, 24, who carries the virus that causes AIDS, said the government spends too much time blaming or feeling sorry for people with AIDS and not enough time helping them.

"HIV is such a scary thing, people don't want to deal with the social issues that lead people to risky behavior," said Davis, a former drug addict and prostitute. "It's easier to blame somebody than to tackle the problem of what makes someone abuse drugs or engage in unsafe sex."

At each stop on her Bay Area tour, Fleming listened, asked questions and instructed an aide to write down the answers in a black notebook that she promised to take back to Washington.

S.F. Chronicle 8/15/95

AIDS czar looks for inspiration in S.F.

**Fleming's focusing
on young people
and women during
two-day area visit**

By April Allison
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

The federal government's top AIDS official came to San Francisco seeking ideas on how to prevent the disease and help people infected with it, especially youths and women.

AIDS czar Patricia Fleming visited hospitals and hospices Monday and met with coordinators of AIDS programs for youths and women as part of her two-day Bay Area visit.

"Women are not seen the same as men," Fleming said to half a dozen young people gathered at the

offices of Health Initiatives for Youth. "People who have the most power get the most out of federal programs. So women have frequently been neglected."

Noting that AIDS was now the leading cause of death among Americans ages 25 to 44, Fleming added, "Young people, at this point, are certainly high on my list of priorities."

One of those who met with Fleming, Yesenia Aguirre, said she hoped the federal government would continue to fund programs such as the one with which she's involved, the Young Women's Health Team, in order to reach people who were not in the mainstream.

"If young women go on without anyone to talk to, they're going to be infected," said Aguirre, 20, program coordinator at the Mission District group, which educates Latinas and Chicanas on preventing HIV infection.

Some 14,000 women were diagnosed as HIV-positive last year, nearly a fifth of all women who

have been diagnosed since 1981.

"I think she's trying to respond, and I think she's sincere when she said she's taking what we said back to Washington," Aguirre said of Fleming. "I hope she was honest and can take into consideration programs like mine so we can get a funding base, because it's difficult to reach out to young women in high-risk communities."

But others in the Bay Area AIDS community feel Fleming has not been a visible enough activist for people with AIDS. ACT UP-

Golden Gate called last month for the abolishment of Fleming's Office of National AIDS Policy, saying an AIDS czar served only as a buffer between the administration and people with AIDS.

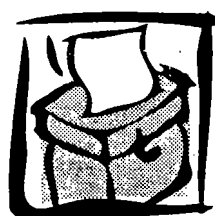
"We feel that Patsy Fleming needs to be more than a passive instrument of the Clinton administration," said Kate Krauss, spokeswoman for ACT UP-Golden Gate. "She must lead. She must be a strong public advocate for people with AIDS."

GOP budget plans threaten AIDS care

THIS WEEK, President Clinton's director of national AIDS policy, Patsy Fleming, visited San

Francisco and attacked Republican budget-cutters for putting Medicaid on the chopping block, a move she says threatens AIDS care for thousands of patients.

"I am very, very concerned," said Fleming, a Democrat, in an interview with *The Examiner*.



"The Republican proposal would cut \$182 billion from Medicaid over the next seven

years. So many AIDS programs depend on Medicaid — this is a very bad thing.

"AIDS care is in serious trouble without (Medicaid) support," Fleming said.

About half of all people with AIDS and 92 percent of all children with AIDS get services through Medicaid, she said.

Major funding reductions might reduce the types of services, such as comprehensive prescription drug coverage, she asserted. She also feared it might change eligibility standards, making it tougher for patients to qualify for care.

Under the Republican plan, there is no requirement that states match the federal contribution to Medicaid. For instance, for every \$100,000 that California gets from Washington, D.C., the state must kick in another \$100,000. This change could also send the Medicaid budget plummeting, she said.

"People will be getting sick and have no place to go," she predicted.

Clinton has vowed to veto the Republican-proposed Budget Reconciliation Bill, with such cutbacks to Medicaid and other entitlement programs, she said.

Fleming also said the rate of new HIV infections has stabilized in the United States. But while infection rates in some groups, such as older gay men, have dropped, they are climbing dramatically in other groups, such as women and gay youth. Last year, there were 40,000 new HIV infections nationwide.

Young people are not getting the prevention message, she said. Half of all new infections last year were among people under age 24, and one-quarter of all new infections were among those under age 20.

Women, particularly Hispanic or African American partners of IV drug users, are vulnerable. New federal statistics show there were 14,000 new cases of AIDS among American women in 1994 alone — one-fifth the number of cases since the epidemic started 14 years ago.

Cuts Pose Threat to AIDS Programs

County Workers Say

By DOUGLAS P. SHUIT
TIMES STAFF WRITER

AIDS programs, particularly those for infected women and infants, will be seriously undermined by budget cuts despite the County Board of Supervisors' vote to fully fund local AIDS services, county health workers warned Friday.

The problem is that although the supervisors have budgeted \$57 million for AIDS programs—enough to satisfy federal matching requirements—they are closing neighborhood clinics and health centers where the AIDS virus often is first detected, the health workers said.

Andrea Kovacs, director of the county's HIV and AIDS program for women and infants at County-USC Medical Center, said most of the important early detection work is done at clinics, particularly those with prenatal programs.

Now these women won't be identified

because they won't get HIV testing and counseling," she said. "They won't identify the babies. We will have an infected child who otherwise might not have been infected. The cost of that down the line will be tremendous."

Kovacs also said the clinics won't be there to provide infected mothers and babies with follow-up treatment, a key component in the fight to control the AIDS virus.

The word of the AIDS threat came after a tour of County-USC by Patricia Fleming, President Clinton's chief policy adviser on AIDS.

She brought county officials good news, saying the Board of Supervisors' vote on AIDS funding appeared to be enough to satisfy matching requirements of the Ryan White CARE Act. That means the county will receive its \$31-million allotment of money from the act, which will be spread throughout the county to provide financial

support for AIDS treatment and HIV testing programs.

While Fleming has been here, she has visited Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan, met and toured private AIDS programs, such as AIDS Project Los Angeles, and grilled physicians and researchers at the sprawling County-USC east of Downtown about the budget cuts. She will wrap up the four-day visit today and return to Washington.

Part of her mission was to rally support for Clinton in his fight to defeat Republican-proposed cuts in the federal Medicaid program, known as Medi-Cal in California. The cuts would reduce spending by \$182 billion over seven years and have a "devastating impact" on the Medi-Cal program, Clinton's adviser said.

Fleming, who attended a news conference at the medical center and later met with reporters and editorial writers at The Times, said that with the cuts the state

would lose a total of \$18 billion in Medicaid payments from 1996 to 2002, and could be forced to knock 1.2 million of the 5 million recipients out of the program.

Fleming said Medicaid pays for far more AIDS treatment than the Ryan White Act.

"Medicaid pays for six times the Ryan White budget," she said. This year Medicaid spending on AIDS services will be \$3.6 billion, compared to \$633 million for the Ryan White program nationally, she said.

Locally, the Board of Supervisors, in an effort to close a \$655-million budget gap in health services funding, voted earlier this month to close nearly all of its 45 neighborhood clinics and regional health centers.

At the same time, the supervisors voted to maintain their current level of funding for AIDS programs, including full funding for the nationally known 5P21 Rand Schrader Clinic, a part of County-USC that annually treats 4,000 AIDS and HIV pa-

tients, more than one-third of all such patients in the county.

Dr. Alexandra Levine, chief of hematology at County-USC and a specialist in AIDS treatment and research, said that even though AIDS programs are relatively well funded compared to other health programs, serious problems will develop because many of the doctors and nurses who treat AIDS patients could be let go as a result of budget cuts elsewhere.

"If you don't have the ophthalmologists, the radiologists, the oncologists and other specialists, then we can't really function the way we are accustomed to functioning," she said.

HIV infection is the leading cause of death for men 25 to 44 in Los Angeles and 11 other California cities with populations of more than 100,000. According to federal statistics, 33.7% of all deaths in Los Angeles in 1992 were caused by HIV.

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