

Epidemiology **Bulletin**

REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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AIDS Added to List of Reportable Diseases

Since June 1981, over 9,000 cases of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) have been reported in the United States and its territories,¹ and the potential for spread of this deadly disease in other countries has caused international concern. As of December 1984, 17 European countries had reported a total of 752 cases to the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre on AIDS.² Confirmed AIDS cases have also been reported in Africa.³ In Asia, there are unconfirmed reports of AIDS cases from Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration licensed test kits based on an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) to detect antibodies to the human lymphotropic virus type III (HTLV-III) believed to be the etiologic agent of AIDS. These test kits are now commercially available. Although ELISA antibody to HTLV-III is important evidence in establishing the diagnosis of AIDS, false positives and false negative results do occur. Further studies are underway to evaluate the test's predictive value. The ELISA test is presently used to screen blood donors in certain high-risk areas in the U.S.

No cases of AIDS have been identified to date among Taiwan residents. Investigators at National Taiwan University Hospital have tested sera from 163 patients in high risk groups for antibody by ELISA to HTLV-III (Table 1). One specimen from a 52 year-old prostitute attending a Taipei City venereal disease clinic, was positive. This woman had no clinical signs or symptoms of AIDS and also had a strongly positive VDRL test. The potential for interference between the ELISA HTLV-III and VDRL tests is unknown. Presently, no other laboratory data from this woman are available. A specimen obtained from a blood donor was slightly positive on the first determination but negative when repeated. The specimens from the prostitute and the blood donor were negative when tested using the Abbott ELISA test kit.

Because of the potential for introduction and subsequent transmission of AIDS in Taiwan, the Department of Health has added AIDS to the list of reportable diseases. All suspect AIDS cases should be reported to the Bureau of Disease Control (02-712-3761). A multidisciplinary committee has been organized to investigate the clinical, laboratory, and epidemiologic aspects of all reported cases. For the purposes of reporting, the following surveillance case definition from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will be used:⁴

AIDS Surveillance Case Definition: The presence of reliably diagnosed disease at least moderately indicative of underlying cellular immunodeficiency (e.g. Kaposi's sarcoma in a patient < 60 years of age, *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia) in a person who has no known causes of underlying immunodeficiency or any other reduced resistance known to be associated with that disease (e.g. immunosuppressive therapy, lymphoreticular malignancy).

To minimize the risk of transmission of AIDS in the United States, the U.S. Public Health Service has made the following recommendations:⁵

1. Sexual contact should be avoided with persons known or suspected of having AIDS. Members of high risk groups (e.g. homosexual or bisexual males, intravenous drug abusers) should be aware that multiple sexual partners increase the probability of developing AIDS.
2. As a temporary measure, members of high risk groups should refrain from donating plasma and/or blood. This recommendation includes all individuals belonging to such groups, even though many individuals are at little risk of AIDS.
3. Studies should be conducted to evaluate screening procedures for effectiveness in identifying and excluding plasma and blood with a high probability of transmitting AIDS. These procedures should include specific laboratory tests as well as careful histories and physical examinations.
4. Physicians should adhere strictly to medical indications for transfusions, and autologous blood transfusions are encouraged.
5. Work should continue toward development of safer blood products for use by hemophilia patients.

Reported by the Bureau of Disease Control, Department of Health, Executive Yuan.

References

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3. Bayley AC, Cheingsong-Popov, Dalgleish AG, et al. HTLV-III serology distinguishes atypical and endemic Kaposi's sarcoma in Africa. Lancet 1985; 1:359-61.
4. CDC. Update: acquired immunodeficiency syndrome - United States. MMWR 1983; 32:3-91.
5. CDC. Prevention of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS): report of inter-agency recommendations.