

Early case of AIDS in the USA

SIR—Two recent news items in *Nature*^{1,2} highlight the case history of a 25-year-old seaman who died in Manchester, England, of *Pneumocystis carinii*, and in retrospect, of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, in 1959, the same year as the earliest serologically confirmed case of AIDS in Africa. The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) was used to amplify HIV genetic material in stored tissue specimens, although distinction between HIV-1 and HIV-2 was inconclusive³. Contrary to a statement in one of the *Nature* articles¹, it is not known whether the Manchester seaman spread

help clarify the epidemiology and viral evolution leading to the AIDS pandemic.

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1. Opinion *Nature* **346**, 92 (1990).
2. Concar, D. *Nature* **346**, 95 (1990).
3. Corbett, G. et al., *Lancet* **336**, 51 (1990).
4. Stretton, T. *Nature* **346**, 505 (1990).
5. Frøland, S.S. et al., *Lancet* **i**, 1344–1345 (1988).
6. Elvin-Lewis, M. et al., *Lymphology* **6**, 113–121 (1973).
7. Witte, M.H. et al., *J. Am. med. Soc.* **251**, 2657 (1984).
8. Garry, R.F. et al., *J. Am. med. Soc.* **260**, 2085–2087 (1988).
9. Mullis, K. & Faloona, F. *Meth. Enzym.* **155**, 335–350 (1987).

Documentation of an AIDS Virus Infection in the United States in 1968

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The acquired immunodeficiency syndrome was first recognized as a clinical entity in the United States in the early 1980s; however, the issue of when human immunodeficiency virus, the causative agent of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, was introduced into at-risk populations in the United States is unresolved. Previously we reported the case study of a 15-year-old male patient in 1968 for exten-

St Louis City Hospital in 1968 for extensive lymphedema of the penis, scrotum, and lower extremities. He had no history of travel outside of the Midwest, intravenous drug abuse, or blood transfusion.

his HIV infection⁴. However, the other commentary² refers to another report of serologically confirmed HIV-1 infection in a Norwegian family including a father (the index patient, also a seaman, whose multisystem illness began in 1966), his wife, and daughter, all of whom died in 1976⁵.

Antecedent to these reports, we documented HIV-1 infection in a 15-year-old black male admitted to St Louis City Hospital in 1968 with extensive genital and bilateral lymphoedema and systemic chlamydial infection, who died less than a year later with a progressive cachexia and disseminated Kaposi's sarcoma^{6,8}. In contrast to the two well-travelled sailors cited above, our patient had never ventured outside the St Louis area. Western blot analysis of frozen serum and antigen capture enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay of stored tissues confirmed infection with HIV-1⁸. Proviral DNA has recently been detected in his tissues by PCR⁹ in collaboration with J. Sninsky and S. Kwok (Cetus Corporation, Emeryville, California) but nucleotide sequence analysis is not yet complete.

Rather than representing the initial incursions of HIV into Britain, Norway and the United States, these documented AIDS patients from the pre-AIDS era support the contention that sporadic cases occurred in developed countries at least several decades before AIDS was formally recognized in the United States in the early 1980s. Sequence analysis of proviral DNA from these patients should be of interest to elucidate relationships to current HIV-1 and HIV-2 strains and thereby

Science sells its soul

SIR—There is a crisis in science, particularly in the biomedical field and particularly in the United States, resulting from a new and spreading perception of the scientific endeavour. The profession of science has shifted from its basic underpinnings. It used to be, and still is in some degree, that there was an allure, a challenge, an adventure of the mind in the solution of riddles. Many were willing to work long hours, even with little pay, to make a discovery and to be recognized for the discovery.

But this has all been changed, particularly in the past decade, the 'me too' decade, for added on has been the allure of money. The thought of many established investigators has become "why should others gain large profits from my work; why should I not also cash in on it?" So there has evolved a scramble to make arrangements, to seek deals, to make sure that one will still enjoy scientific work while raking in the cash. Postdoctoral fellows and students cannot fail to notice this behaviour of their mentors, and to be influenced by it. The adventure is still sweet, but a monetary component has been added.

It used to be that a scientist worked in a university or medical school to achieve the goals of the institution — teaching and research. Now he or she is asked or cajoled to perform another function, that of bringing in money to the university. If

there are no arrangements with industry to bring in patent-generated money, or licensing fees, one is looked upon as an outcast, not doing one's share to keep the university viable.

Thus, increasingly, the scientific endeavour is being looked upon by young scientists as a way of making money while gaining scientific acclaim on the side. Companies have been set up by scientists to rake in the cash; the supposed rationale has been to bring desirable products onto the public market, a public benefit as a product of the research. But to other scientists, old or young, still imbued with the former ideals of science, all this is hypocrisy. Although they recognize that science cannot be amoral, that 'pure' science is a fiction, that it is influenced by the many political and social forces in our culture, they abhor the commercialization of science.

The future of scientific research is in danger not only from a decline in funding, but also from within. As idealism drains away so too does the spirit that is the adventure of scientific research, drawing to it less and less of our dedicated youth. Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith* is out; biotechnology companies are in.

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Missing the joke

SIR—I would like to make a minor but important correction to an item that appeared in the Opinion section (*Nature* **346**, 398; 1990). In connection with the use of the same vehicle for carrying food and garbage, US General Accounting Office wags are quoted as quipping: "What has four wheels and fries?" Here in America the way the joke runs as I know it is: what has four wheels and *flies*?

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Celebrating Charles Darwin

SIR—It has recently come to light that Britain has fewer public holidays than many other countries. Your readers may wish to know that we have formed a Forum to Instate a Charles Darwin Day. It seems to us fitting that Britain should have a regular public holiday to commemorate the man who first explained humanity to humanity.

Further information may be had from the undersigned.

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