

AIDS, Like Syphilis, Is A Mimic; Nervous System Among Its Targets

Many Americans are aware that AIDS attacks the body's immune system, damaging or destroying its ability to fight off infections that normally it could handle with ease. Not so well known, however, is that the deadly virus also attacks the central nervous system and produces a variety of neurological symptoms, including increasing forgetfulness and clumsiness. "Since people with AIDS have a higher incidence of infections, it's not uncommon for them to have a higher incidence of brain abscesses and infections that involve the nervous system," said Dr. Colin D. Hall, professor of neurology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In addition, it now appears that the AIDS virus kills off nerve cells on its own so that a lot of people infected with the virus develop neurologic problems before they have either the secondary infections or tumors associated with AIDS.

It may be that even if an exposed individual never develops what's being called "full-blown AIDS," Hall said he still could gradually lose control of his brain and muscles.

"While neurologic symptoms are seen most commonly as a late effect in people who are already having other troubles from the AIDS virus, sometimes they can begin very early," he said.

As an example, the physician cited a middle-aged Haitian migrant worker who was treated at North Carolina Memorial Hospital in

Chapel Hill after complaining of weakness in both legs. The man, who had enlarged glands and a spinal cord lesion, was found to have AIDS. Another patient in his mid-20s came to the hospital after suffering a seizure, but no other symptoms. After laboratory tests, physicians found that he had high levels of antibodies to the HIV virus which causes AIDS. He then admitted that he knew he had been infected since he had been living with a homosexual who died of AIDS in New York, and he had tested positive earlier.

Neurologists in major cities like New York and San Francisco are getting so used to seeing patients with AIDS that the disease is among the first things they think of when they treat patients with nerve disorders, Hall said.

"We haven't seen so many cases of it here that we are at that stage yet, but we are getting that way," he said. "It's changing the whole way we think about disease."

Doctors used to call syphilis "the great mimic" because its symptoms could mimic almost any other disease, he explained. AIDS is beginning to develop the same reputation.

"I can't think of any neurologic disease, including strokes, that might not be associated with AIDS," Hall said. The current AIDS epidemic may be more like the great syphilis epidemics of the 16th century in Europe than it is like the polio epidemics of the 1940s and

early 1950s. "You never knew where polio was going to strike, and there was really nothing you could do about it except take measures like closing swimming pools and keeping children away from one another," he said. "But polio at least was rapid. You either died from it or developed some kind of major disability and survived."

"AIDS just goes continually downhill like syphilis did in the 1950s when it was much more virulent than it is now."

The good news about AIDS is that it doesn't appear to be spread by casual contact. No one who doesn't fall into one of the known risk groups for the illness, who is not sexually promiscuous or who isn't exposed to bodily fluids of AIDS patients needs to fear contracting it.

94 Countries Represented At UNCC

An analysis of fall enrollment data at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte reveals a diverse student body among the 12,031 students. In terms of out-of-state enrollment, North Carolina continues to lead with 14 students.

Other leading states in terms of UNC Charlotte enrollment are New York, 128; South Carolina, 90; Virginia, 86; and Pennsylvania, 81. Forty-three states are represented.

Mecklenburg County, as expected, continues as the leading county in terms of enrollment, with 4,667. Cabarrus is a strong second with 735. Other leading counties are Gaston, 526; Forsyth, 478; and Rowan, 414. Of North Carolina's 100 counties, 94 are represented.

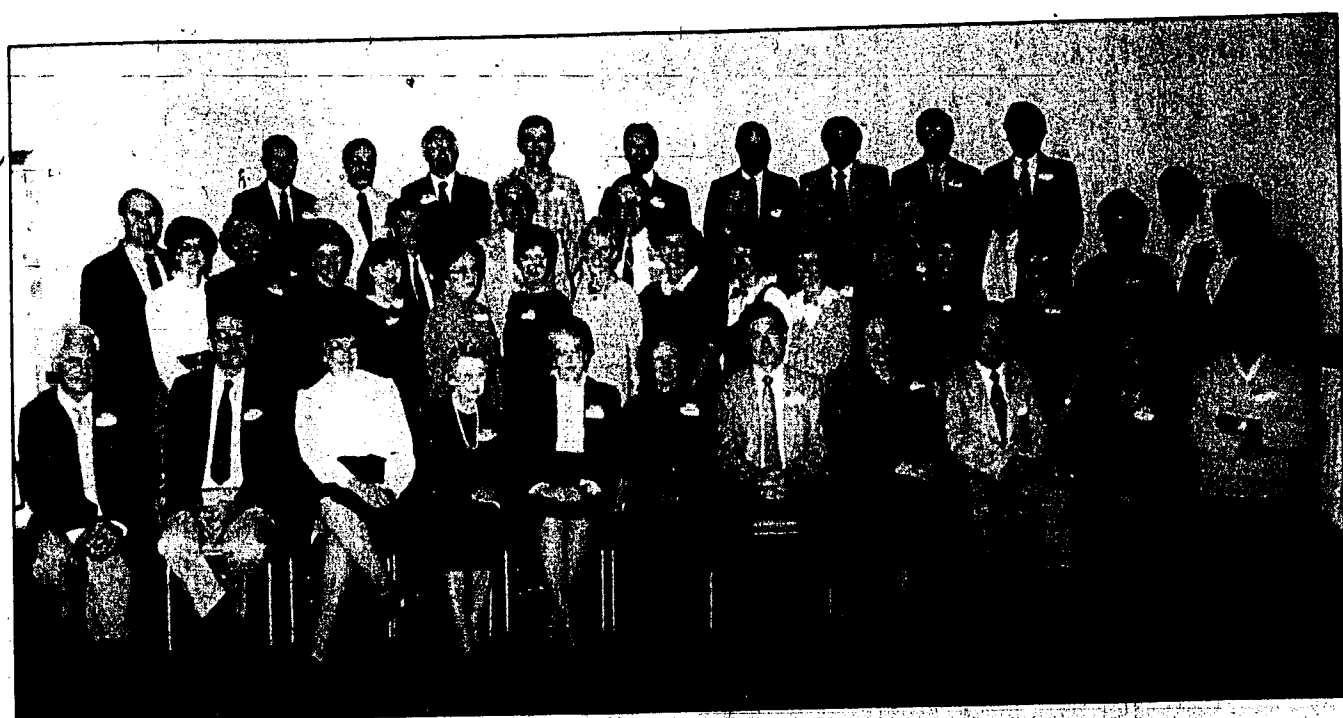
Malaysia is the leading foreign country in terms of UNCC enrollment with 46 students. Other leading countries are Lebanon with 39; India, 25; Jordan, 23; and China, Kuwait, and Taiwan, tied with 15 students each. Fifty-five foreign nations are represented, and total international enrollment is 359.

\$403 From Students In Turkeywalk

Troutman Middle School cheerleaders participated in the American Heart Association Turkeywalk, Nov. 14.

Those involved were Anita Sigmon, Jennifer Beaver, Jodi Kress, Nicole Matheson, April Dyson, and Jennifer Donahedian. Their coaches, Susan Barnett and Debbie Burgess, also took part in the five-mile walk. The group raised \$403.

Lunch was provided afterward by their coaches.



Troutman High School's Class Of '62 Holds Reunion

Members of Troutman High School's graduating class of 1962 met in reunion at the Ramada Inn in Statesville Oct. 17. In attendance, from left, were: front row — Bob Ramsey, teacher Bill Dulin, teacher Mary Ruth Godfrey, teacher Mrs. Kenneth Suther, teacher Don Galliher, Sheila Murdock Rudisill, Walker Barefoot, Anne Edmiston, Johnny Murdock, Braxton Bridergers, and Robert Neill. Second row — Steve Hager, Pat Porter, Lofin, Wanda Hardy Blackwelder, Carolyn Bass Moody, Judy Honeycutt, Judy Fields Reid, Betty Plyler

Cooper, Betty Houston Ammerman, Ellen Neill Jones, Patty Williams Summers, Peggy Jarvis Johnson, Betty Brewer Tevapaugh, Linda Bue Barber, Beth Stewart Phillips, Patsy Ross Smith, and Allen Compton. Third row — Harry Loftin, Bob Smith, Danny Wilhelm, Bobby Upright, Ronnie Clodfelter, Carol Shoemaker Bell, Howard Cox, and Thilbert Hager. Back row — Graham Neilson, Michael Jarrell, Darrell Mayhew, Gary Brown, Ed Kyles, Harold Mills, Dale Rogers, Henry Bridgers, and Wayne Blackwelder.

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One Committee Manages All Red Pandas In U.S.

Even a hurricane can have a silver lining. At least that's what animal keepers at the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park in Washington, D.C., recall about Hurricane Agnes in 1972.

As the giant storm poured rain mercilessly on the park's grounds, the normally peaceful Rock Creek— which runs through the zoo's grounds—roared over its banks and filled zoo buildings to the rafters with silt-laden water. Keepers worked through the night to rescue foxes and wolves from low-lying exhibits.

But when the rain stopped, the keepers were relieved to find a reason to celebrate. Sometime during the storm, two red pandas had been born—a first for the National Zoo and mother and young were snug inside a hollow sycamore tree.

Animal keeper Miles Roberts was given the job of taking care of the new mother and her offspring. At the time, he knew would not be easy because captive births were so rare. The job became a 15-year search for a better understanding of the species.

"Until these births, red panda births in zoos were extremely rare and most cubs did not survive," Roberts, who is now a research zoologist at the zoo, notes. The San Diego Zoo "had some success breeding the red panda during the 1940s and '50s, but the last birth had been in 1965. By 1972, the only other North American zoo exhibiting red pandas were those in Houston, Atlanta and Buffalo."

"The red panda, unknown to Western scientists until 1821, is the original panda," Roberts says. "It wasn't until 1869 that the much larger black-and-white 'giant' panda most people know was discovered. Although the two share some characteristics, including similarly shaped teeth, grasping forepaws and a diet primarily of bamboo, recent genetic analysis has shown that the red panda is more closely related to raccoons than to giant pandas." To distinguish between the two, scientists named the bigger one an adult weight around 250 pounds the "giant panda." The smaller one—which weighs only about 11 pounds in

adulthood—was called the "lesser panda." Only recently, zoologists have begun calling the small panda the "red" panda, since in their estimation, its red coat is a most distinctive feature.

Less is certainly more when it comes to this animal. Today, 27 zoos in North America exhibit the red panda, which has become one of the zoo world's most popular animals. This cat-sized native of several mountainous regions in the Himalayan region of Asia is enjoying its newfound celebrity as the result of interest by biologists such as Roberts. Their work has led to routine captive breeding of the red panda, so that enough exist for zoo visitors to enjoy.

Among biologists, the appeal of this richly colored, stocky panda is well documented. Zoologists normally record their observations with objective detachment, but this creature is described by many as "the most beautiful mammal" and "the cutest zoo-kept animal." Zoo visitors young and old punctuate their conversations with excited "oh's" and "ah's" when a red panda descends from its arboreal home and surveys its zoo habitat, traveling in a fast-paced, high-stepping gait. With their bright, chestnut-red body, creamy white face and shiny, black fur on their legs, they look like a cross between a fox and a cat.

In the early 1970s, a resurgence of interest in the species occurred as births at the National Zoo made investigations of red panda husbandry possible. "We recognized early on in this work that an outdoor enclosure with a tree providing a safe retreat from the commonality of zoos was most desirable," Roberts says. The animals are impervious to cold weather and only reproduce when left outdoors. A diet heavy on roughage, including bamboo and grass eaten from the lawn inside the enclosure, supplemented with cereal products, also seemed beneficial.

Many of the animals contracted distemper until scientists discovered that the vaccine commonly available infected the red pandas with the disease. National zoo veterinarians collaborated with

scientists at Cornell University to develop an effective alternative to protect their charges from this often fatal ailment. Annual births became the rule, but a high infant mortality still slowed population increases.

"You never know what you're going to discover by watching the animals," Roberts says, while explaining one measure that has helped. "We had a litter born in a hollow tree in an enclosure once used by raccoons. I saw the mother take the cubs from the tree and one by one carry them around the enclosure as if she were looking for another place to hide her youngsters."

"We put a nest box in the yard and she moved the cubs into the box," he continues. "When she began carrying the cubs again, we added another box. After that, she regularly moved the cubs between the two nest boxes and the tree. We suspected that having multiple hiding places provided a sense of security. She raised that litter without a problem. Later we found that just one appropriately designed box provides that security."

Litter survival also improved when keepers made nest boxes cooler by improving ventilation and using a special type of straw to construct the panda enclosures. "Some species of mammals hide their young and only return to the nest to nurse," Roberts says. In the case of red pandas, the strategy to conceal their offspring from predators. When we cooled the nest boxes, though, we discovered that the opposite mothers spent all the time they could with their cubs. The mothers were avoiding the summer heat and when Mom was there, so was the food, and the cubs developed much better."

As more cubs survived, more zoos have introduced their visitors to *Ailuropus fulgens*, the "fire fox," as the red panda's scientific name translates from the Latin. Ted Beattie, director of the Knoxville, Tenn., Zoological Park, where 30 red pandas have been born, says, "The people of Knoxville definitely know a red panda when they see one. They're a big deal in Knoxville and an important part of our research and exhibition programs."

The proximity of the Knoxville Zoo to the University of Tennessee has made it possible for a zoologist there, Dr. John Gittleman, to conduct research on the species' behavior. The Knoxville Zoo and Gittleman share information developed through the study with participants in a formal network of zoos that keep red pandas. This group participates in one of several "Species Survival Plans" established by the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums in Wheeling, W.Va. The Smithsonian's Roberts coordinates the red panda group.

One committee manages all the red pandas in North America as a single collection. The group develops breeding strategies that minimize detrimental inbreeding and equalize the genetic contribution of the original red pandas that established the entire North American population.

"Even with all we've learned, only

about 25 percent of the red pandas born make it into the breeding program," Roberts reports. "Infant mortality is still a problem. Only a 10 percent improvement in the infant mortality rate would greatly increase our capacity to propagate red pandas."

Roberts has encouraged more research to improve cub survival. Red panda mothers tend to become thin and run-down when raising successive litters. Re-evaluation of diets, along with studies on red panda "energetics" at the University of Florida may help solve this problem. Improved information on the species' anatomy is also being developed, and an effective regimen for hand rearing cubs has been established.

Roberts, who traveled to eastern Nepal in 1979 to survey red pandas in the wild, believes research conducted at zoos and universities may have implications reaching beyond North America. "People visualize red panda habitat as undisturbed forests in vast mountain ranges," he says. "In fact, in many regions, the red pandas live only in small hilltop patches of forest that are isolated like islands."

During his 1979 visit, Roberts saw only a few red pandas and reports from other field biologists indicate that the species may not be as common as once believed. In an ambitious study to understand the species' ecology, a Nepalese scientist succeeded in placing radio

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