

# Society needs a fair and sane policy toward AIDS

SJSU inevitably must confront the problem of how to handle a student with AIDS and the directors of Student Health Services are working quickly to formulate an official policy.

When a student at this school walks into the Student Health Center with AIDS, the medical personnel need to be prepared. SJSU is not alone in our concern. Stanford, Berkeley, and other Bay Area schools are already dealing with the problem. Colleges all over the nation are preparing themselves for the day when this frightening disease begins to hit the student body.

Dr. Raymond Miller, director of Student Health Services, and Dr. Robert Latta, assistant director, are developing policies for students who are victims of the disease. Some of the problems they try to handle are how to deal with AIDS victims in classes, in on-campus housing, those with positive exposure to the AIDS virus but who do not show symptoms of the disease, and those showing symptoms of ARC, AIDS Related Complex.

The Carmel School Board has recently voted not to let children with AIDS into public schools. The rationale to this is that the children are sick, and shouldn't go to school. Carmel's hyper reaction to the situation obviously shows an ignorance, an attitude that AIDS is not a "proper" disease, something that doesn't happen in their community.

This common perception of the disease is beginning to break down now, as over 2 million people have been exposed to the virus. Not all of these people are sick now, or

even showing symptoms, and no one knows if they will be. But it will be difficult to keep these people from continuing their employment, education, and life. Carmel's decision does not set the standard and probably won't hold up.

In the midst of paranoia, homophobia, and religious accusations, there must be a sane voice. Fear has already brought harsher societal affects than the disease itself,



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which is still relatively hard to get.

Patients with AIDS must not only contend with the biological aspects of a disease that wreaks havoc with the immune system and goes into the brain, causing mental deterioration and a slow, painful death, they must also

deal with the hatred and bigotry of people who insist they had it coming to them. It is a sad paradox that it's taken the rapid spread of the virus to begin to take credence away from this attitude.

Facts are facts. AIDS is a viral disease, transmitted through body fluids. Anyone can get AIDS. It is not in anyone's best interest to blame, or hold responsible any minority group for the spread of the virus.

Theories have traced its origin to the green rhesus monkey in Africa, where it was somehow exposed to the human bloodstream. AIDS is a biological mechanism, not a moral one.

The current plan for SJSU policy is to take into consideration the individual rights of the person afflicted with AIDS, above the fear of the disease. A workable plan is being developed, which would allow the individual to attend school and live where he or she chooses, without fear of discrimination. Institutionalization would come only when the disease has entered the stages where hospitalization is the only recourse.

The Health Center, who, through the most current medical knowledge available, are doing their best to formulate a fair and sane policy should be commended.

Developing policy on the basis of current information is, in regards to AIDS, difficult at best. The AIDS virus has not been entirely figured out. The information changes daily. Yet something must be done on what is known, even if that information is suspect. We must start somewhere, and soon.