

Protection ignored by women, study says

STAMFORD, Conn. (AP) — A study in the United States indicates that many married women who have affairs often don't protect themselves against sexually transmitted diseases.

"This is a woman who deludes herself because she's married and she thinks she's safe," said Stella Mostel, a Stamford sex therapist.

"She probably only has one other partner and she's making the assumption that the other partner is monogamous. But if she has several (partners) and his wife has several, then the risk escalates."

Mostel, who has a doctorate in clinical sexology, recently completed the study of 204 married women and 152 single women in a Connecticut county.

She found 29 per cent of the married women had extramarital relationships and 41 per cent of that group had contracted more than one sexually transmitted disease. Yet, only 17 per cent of them had made any changes in their sexual behavior.

Mostel said she was surprised by how little these women were concerned about such diseases.

She also said married women who have affairs are an unrecognized risk group for AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

"What happens is that gynecologists and physicians make assumptions that the married woman is probably monogamous and very little is discussed with her about precautions," Mostel said.

"Safe sex has to be defined in two ways — being protected from pregnancy and safety from contracting any sexually transmitted diseases."

She added, "I think we have to eroticize the condom and make it part of sexuality instead of, 'Oh no, we have to use it.'"

SKIN CAN GIVE AIDS CLUE

CHICAGO (AP) — More than a half-dozen skin conditions ranging from blisters to warts may serve as warnings of AIDS infection months or even years before other symptoms appear, doctors have reported.

"AIDS causes suppression of the immune system, and that suppression will allow for the florid appearance of common skin diseases — herpes, warts, fungal infections," Dr. Marcus Conant of the University of California Medical Centre at San Francisco said Wednesday.

The skin problems can show up months before the weight loss, fatigue and more severe infections typical of AIDS, said Conant, a dermatology professor who estimates he has treated 1,000 patients with the disease.

Conant was commenting on a new study from Finland that found a variety of unusually severe or persistent skin problems were early markers for AIDS infection among 235 healthy homosexual and bisexual men tracked for three years.

Thirty-three of the men eventually developed antibodies to the AIDS virus, indicating exposure, said the study, published in the November issue of the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology.

The study said all of the men with antibodies had one or more of the skin problems:

■ Herpes simplex blisters in the rectum and anus and new warts on the hands, feet and in the beard area.

■ Extensive fungal infections of the feet.

■ Inflammation, redness and blistering that complicated bacterial skin infections such as impetigo, which typically causes a patch of tiny blisters, usually around the nose and mouth.

■ Inflamed hair follicles in the armpits or elsewhere.

■ Severe seborrheic dermatitis, an oily scaling of the face, scalp and body skin.

■ Excessively dry skin or prematurely aged skin.

Researchers have long known certain fungal infections of the mouth may give early warning of AIDS infection, and the study listed subjects with one of these — oral candidiasis, which causes creamy white patches on the tongue or cheek.

Another fungal infection, called hairy leukoplakia, which causes leathery whitish areas with hair-like projections on the tongue, also is known to be an early marker of AIDS infection.

The study's author, Dr. Sirkka-Liisa Valle of Aurora Hospital in Helsinki, said physicians who discover usually severe patterns of these infections should be suspicious of AIDS infection.

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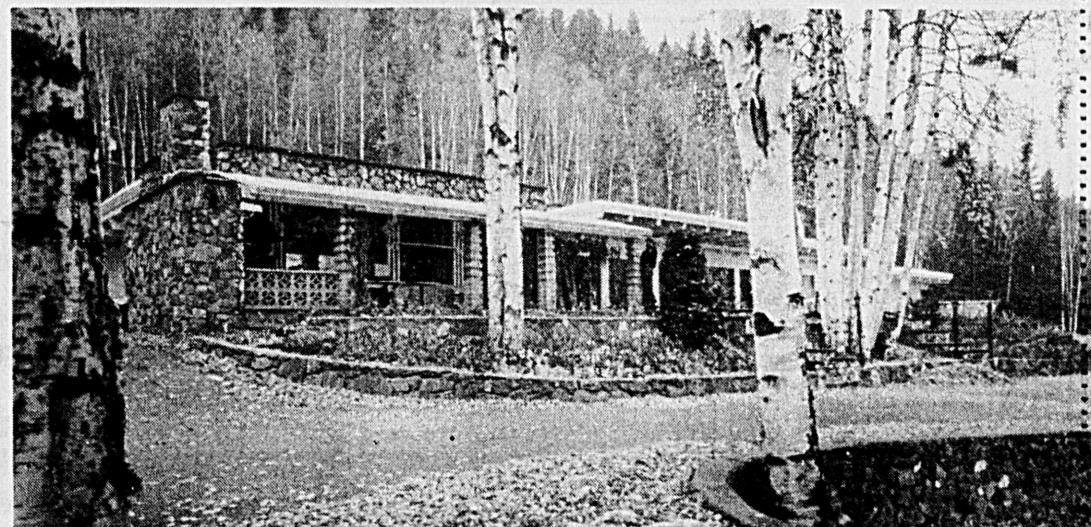
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