



Emory report nov 1 2004



longer and remain sexually active, yet many lack appropriate knowledge about HIV transmission and prevention, according to recent findings published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*. The findings are based on a questionnaire that surveyed 514 women aged 50 and older in the general medical clinics at Grady Hospital.

Out of nine questions assessing the women's knowledge of HIV sexual transmission risks, the mean score was 3.7, and no respondent correctly answered all nine questions. This poor performance suggests that active measures must be taken to increase older women's knowledge about the virus.

Participants also identified all sources from which they received HIV information. Eighty-five percent of those surveyed indicated they received their information from television; another 54 percent said they learned about HIV from friends; and 51 percent identified newspapers as a

professor of medicine at Grady served as principal investigator and is one of the study's leading authors.

"The misconception is that older people don't have sex anymore, and that they really are not engaging in risky activity," Bernstein said. "[Concerning] older women being at risk for HIV, much of that risk is based on how much they know about HIV. Unfortunately this population has not been targeted with HIV prevention messages because they aren't considered to be at risk. Yet their risk is rooted partially in their low knowledge."

According to the article, 10 percent of AIDS cases in U.S. adult women have occurred in those 50 and older, the majority of these resulting from sexual transmission. The article also notes that 32 percent of these women were 60 or older at diagnosis, suggesting their infections occurred in the post-menopausal years.

Older adults, the article continues, do not know as much about HIV transmission and

questions about HIV/AIDS than younger adults. The most pronounced deficits involved the efficacy of condoms in preventing HIV transmission.

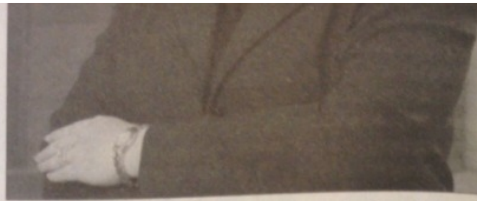
"The important thing to realize is that these patients are still sexually active," Bernstein said. "The problem is they don't realize that they're at risk for this life-threatening disease. By trying to improve their knowledge and impart the fact that physicians have a tremendous role to play in educating patients—even those who are older than we normally think to be at risk—we can really make great strides to protect them against this disease."

As part of the study, data were collected between June 2001 and July 2002 in face-to-face interviews. Women were asked nine questions to assess their knowledge of HIV sexual transmission and prevention. Questions involved such topics as heterosexual intercourse, kissing, oral sex, abstinence, condom use, spermicide, diaphragm, vasectomy and

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a mode of transmission; 76 percent overestimated oral sex as a mode of HIV transmission; and only 13 percent identified condoms as effective in preventing HIV, while 18 percent said they were not effective at all. Forty-four percent of the women said abstinence was not at all or somewhat effective.

Future elections. Presidential election takes place on the rest of November won't be empty.

"The point is to vote with your feet, attend all these activities and learn about the groups on campus," said Donna Wong, associate director of multicultural activities and chair of the planning committee.

Created 21 years ago to be an eclectic blend highlighting diversity in the arts, society, religion and academia, Unity Month has grown in length from a week to a month, and the depth of the celebration has only become more impressive.

Most days in November boast more than one event and the month gets off to a smashing

Benefit Drew Charter students

## CAMPUSPLANNING

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