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to-catch and very easy-to-prevent disease. We quote the good doctor (who has knocked around enough to earn a DP shirt):

The majority of people with symptomatic hepatitis B infection don't die, but spend a month wishing they would. One percent develop *fulminate* [Webster's: developing or progressing suddenly] disease and die of liver failure. (On the bright side, if you get back to the United States before getting sick, fulminate liver failure moves you to the top of the liver transplant list.) Five to 10 percent of people become chronic carriers, which means they can infect other people. For women this includes 85 percent of the children they carry who don't get treated. Thirty percent of chronic carriers have ongoing liver disease (chronic active hepatitis). Many progress to cirrhosis and require liver transplants (but start out lower on the transplant list). People with chronic active hepatitis develop liver cancer at a rate of 3 percent per year. The bad news if you get a liver transplant: Hepatitis B is usually still in your body and infects the new liver.

AIDS

Perhaps the most dangerous and publicized disease is AIDS. It strikes right at the heart of American phobia—pain for pleasure. AIDS is the terminal phase of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV is usually the precursor to AIDS, and then the victim succumbs to death by cancer, pneumonia, or other afflictions that attack the weakened human immune system. AIDS has roughly a nine-year incubation period.

AIDS was supposed to have jumped from animal to man when humans ate simians in Africa. The simian virus that spawned AIDS comes from animals that live in Gabon, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea. Other strains have made the crossover from chimpanzee to man.

Initially brushed aside as "the gay plague" or an "African disease," AIDS has in the last few years become the biggest killer of young American men and women. Washington, DC, has the nation's highest rate, far higher than even New York or San Francisco, according to statistics released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 1995, the DC rate was 185.7 AIDS cases per 100,000 residents. Puerto Rico was second with a rate of 70.3 cases per 100,000, followed by New York, Florida, and New Jersey. Nationwide, the rate of AIDS cases is 27.8 cases per 100,000. The CDC says that AIDS is spreading rapidly among women and minorities now, while the epidemic among heterosexual white men has slowed. Women accounted for 19 percent of AIDS cases among adults and adolescents nationwide. A growing

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ber of children are being orphaned by AIDS, which has become the leading cause of death among women of childbearing age in the United States, according to a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Blacks are six times more likely to have AIDS than whites and twice as likely to have AIDS as Hispanics.

As sobering as the U.S. statistics are, the rate of deaths caused by AIDS in other countries is alarming. WHO says that chronic underreporting and underdiagnosis in developing countries means the actual figure is probably more than the official number of 40 million cases (2.7 million of them are children under 15). More than 70 percent of the estimated cases were in Africa, 9 percent in the United States, 9 percent in the rest of the American hemisphere, 6 percent in Asia, and 4 percent in Europe. (These statistics include only people with active cases of AIDS or those who have died from the disease.)

There are currently 2 million HIV-infected people in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Pan American Health Organization says HIV is increasing among women in the Caribbean and Central America and it is expected to increase rapidly, particularly in areas where injection drug use is prevalent.

According to Italy's statistics institute, ISTAT, AIDS has become as big a killer in Italy as road accidents. An estimated 4,370 Italians died from AIDS last year, compared to 6,000 deaths on the roads. For young males between 18 and 29 in Italy, AIDS has overtaken drugs as the second leading cause of death. ISTAT estimates that the number of HIV-infected Italians is at least 100,000.

AIDS is also on the increase in smaller countries. WHO estimates that at least 400,000, or 1 percent, of Myanmar's citizens are infected with HIV. A high number of injection drug users, social tolerance of prostitution, and large amounts of cross-border trade with nearby nations make Myanmar's populace more vulnerable. Condoms are also costly and rarely used in Myanmar, exacerbating the problem.

Ministry of Health statistics show that more than 100,000 residents of Zimbabwe have died of AIDS-related causes in the past decade. Another 100,000, or 1 percent, of the country's population is expected to succumb to AIDS in the next year and a half. AIDS is expected to slow population growth, lower life expectancies, and raise child mortality rates in many of the world's poorer countries over the next 25 years, according to a report by the U.S. Census Bureau.

In 16 countries—the African nations of Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Congo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, plus Brazil, Haiti, and Thailand—AIDS will slow population growth rates so dramatically that by 2010, there will be 121 million fewer people than previously

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