

Prime Minister (2)

For reference. Unpleasant, but I am sure

PRIME MINISTER

24 February 1986

AIDS

*Do we have to do
the action on Risky sex?
I should have thought
it could do more harm if long
termers*

*DHSS are right to propose a press campaign
like this. It meet on Tuesday Edition.
MHA 24/2*

Norman Fowler is proposing to place explicit and distasteful advertisements about AIDS in all the Sunday papers. The AIDS problem is now so serious that we must do as he proposes, though his advert could open with more facts about the spread of AIDS.

*wants read
it
mb*

We have so far had 275 cases of clinical AIDS in this country. But approximately 20,000 people are known to be carrying the virus. The Chief Medical Officer estimates that perhaps 25% of these people go on to develop clinical AIDS. But he may be optimistic - it is possible that they will all develop AIDS over the coming years.

The cost of treating someone with clinical AIDS is very cautiously estimated at £10,000-£20,000. That represents a bill between £50m and £100m just for the people currently with the virus who can be expected to catch the disease. The number of people with the virus is doubling every year.

The virus is mainly transmitted between homosexuals and between drug addicts who share contaminated needles. In Edinburgh 50% of drug addicts have the virus (as against 10% of addicts elsewhere) because pharmacists clamped down on providing needles for addicts. The challenge is to achieve proper public health supervision of addicts without encouraging drug-taking. AIDS isn't just transmitted between drug-takers and homosexuals. It can also be transmitted by normal intercourse. The following causal chain is perfectly possible: a drug-taker who finances her addiction by prostitution transmits the virus to a male client who passes it on to his wife who gives birth to a baby with the virus. These are the sorts of mechanism whereby AIDS can spread out to the population at large.

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