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**SOME AIDS EDUCATION MATERIALS
MAY WORSEN WORKER FEAR OF AIDS VICTIMS**

For Immediate Release

January 26, 1989

Some materials used to educate U.S. workers about the dangers of AIDS may be creating an unintended side effect: making employees more fearful of those who have the disease.

A new Georgia Tech survey has found that workers who received educational brochures or pamphlets about the disease are more likely to have negative feelings toward AIDS-stricken co-workers than employees who received no information.

The survey found little change in attitude among employees who attended lectures or viewed videotapes on AIDS. However, employees who participated in comprehensive training sessions became significantly less fearful, the survey found.

Dr. David Herold, director of Georgia Tech's Center on Work Performance Problems, said the results suggest companies should be more concerned about the kind of messages workers receive through AIDS information. By focusing only on practices which can transmit the disease, he suggests, many educational materials neglect to deal with the social, emotional and humanitarian aspects of the problem.

"Education may be the key, but we need to look very closely at what kind of education that should be," he explained. "A lot of the literature we produce may be appropriate for changing risky behaviors, but it may do little to address other aspects of the problem. We need to develop effective programs which go beyond how people get it and directly target the attitudes of the general population."

Though the survey included only Georgia workers, Herold believes the conclusions apply nationwide because most companies use similar educational materials.

He warned that producing new materials or more comprehensive educational programs will be costly: "Education in the area of AIDS will need to be more comprehensive than many people think."

The survey is believed to be the first to study how education efforts affect attitudes toward AIDS victims.

Herold also documented a fear of those who merely associate with AIDS victims, a phenomenon he termed "AIDS once removed." His survey found that 20 percent of those questioned expressed reservations about working with those who might be caring for a friend or relative ill with AIDS.

"We not only have to be able to deal with what happens when a person with AIDS is in the work force, but also the potential disruption related to the millions of other people who associate with people who have AIDS," Herold warned.

RATHER QUIT THAN ASSOCIATE

In his previous survey, Herold documented the objections many workers had about working closely with an AIDS-infected person. His new survey reveals that those feelings run deep: Sixty one percent of those persons said they would risk losing their jobs rather than work with an AIDS-stricken co-worker. Among workers aged 45 to 54, 85 percent would risk their jobs over the issue.

"Employers must be concerned about the potential disruption which could result if workers act on their concerns," Herold warned. Employers may find themselves in a Catch-22 position: caught between employees who balk at working with an infected co-worker and laws prohibiting discrimination against AIDS victims, he said.

Twenty percent of those surveyed said they would protest to their supervisor if asked to work with an AIDS-infected person. That figure ranged from a high of 45 percent for skilled blue-collar workers, to approximately three percent for clerical workers.

Herold's new survey of 528 Georgia employees found attitudes similar to his pioneering February 1988 study of AIDS in the workplace. Forty-one percent would not want to work closely with a person who has AIDS; 36 percent would not want to shake hands or sit next to a person with the disease; 33 percent would be concerned about eating in the same cafeteria - and 59 percent would not want to share bathroom facilities.

Concerns that workers have about AIDS relate closely to their confidence in assurances that AIDS can only be transmitted through sexual contact or blood contamination. Seventy-six percent of respondents said they believe these assurances.

The survey results were unveiled January 26 at a conference for Georgia business executives called "Managing AIDS in the Workplace."

Herold's results, based on telephone interviews with randomly-selected persons, found that 19 percent of those questioned knew of someone who had AIDS or who had died from the disease. Yet only one-third of the Georgia employees said their companies had made an effort to educate them on the disease.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A complete statistical analysis for the survey is available.