



# PIT T M E N ' S S T U D Y

## NEWS AND NOTES

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### PITT CHOSEN FOR NEW STUDY OF HIV EFFECTS ON THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

The Pitt Men's Study has been chosen as one of the sites to begin a new study of the effect of HIV infection on the central nervous system. Since the identification of AIDS several years ago, it has become increasingly apparent that men infected with HIV, and those with ARC and AIDS can develop a syndrome affecting the nervous system. In patients with AIDS, this can include memory loss, confusion, depression, and sometimes problems of coordination. These symptoms have even appeared in individuals who did not have either AIDS or ARC. It can thus appear relatively early in the course of the HIV infection.

In an effort to understand this problem, the Pitt Men's Study will ask 200 randomly selected men to enroll in this study. These men can agree to participate or not. If men choose not to participate, they will still remain regular members of Study II. Although this will require an additional 45 minutes of time, it will be added to the normal clinic visit. At this time, each man will be asked to fill out forms describing their mood and feelings. They will also answer some questions about symptoms that they may be experiencing. Finally, these men will take five "paper and pencil" tests which measure memory, learning, and motor skill. Some people may find these tests a bit anxiety provoking. However, they are much like schoolwork and most people can perform them very easily. Some men may be asked to return to the clinic at another time for more extensive testing. When someone is asked to return this does not mean that something is wrong, only that more tests are necessary to rule out problems.

As with all of the testing performed at the PMS clinic, the results of these tests are confidential. The personnel in the

clinic have all been carefully selected, and trained to the highest level of proficiency.

This study is very important because this will be the first time that the nervous system in HIV infected men is closely studied before someone has AIDS. Pittsburgh was selected for this study because of the special expertise we have in studying the nervous system.

### SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER IF YOU ARE ASKED TO JOIN

#### On one hand:

1. The tests will take an extra 45 minutes of your time.
2. You may be uncomfortable taking verbal skills and similar tests.

#### On the other hand:

1. This research is essential because it will describe the progression of effects of HIV on the nervous system. This information will be used to develop treatments for this disease.
2. You will receive between \$400 to \$1,500 in free medical testing beyond the \$1,000 of free testing in the Pitt Men's Study.
3. If you are HIV antibody positive, the tests will identify problems early on and give you an opportunity to seek treatment.
4. If you are HIV antibody negative, the tests will be useful as controls in the study.

### MEET THE NEW DIRECTOR OF OUR NEW ADDITIONAL STUDY

James T. Becker, Ph.D.

Dr. Becker is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. He received his graduate degrees in Experimental Psychology from

Northeastern University and the Johns Hopkins University. He studied neuropsychology in Boston with Dr. Nelson Butters, an expert in memory disorder, and in Farmington (Connecticut) at the Alcohol Research Center. He moved to Pittsburgh in 1984 joining an established team of investigators in the Alzheimer's Research Program.

Dr. Becker was born in New York City, but immediately left town to travel in the South (San Antonio and Richmond). He returned to New York to spend his "Wonder" years, but moved to New England to attend high school. He was graduated from Washington and Lee University in 1975, with a major in psychology.

Dr. Becker comes to the study of HIV infection through his work in acquired memory disorders. He is currently studying a large group of elderly people with Alzheimer's Disease, and many of the problems found in these patients are similar to the mental problems associated with HIV infection. "The tools that we have acquired working with Alzheimer's Disease will be very helpful in allowing us to attack the problems in HIV infection", Becker says. "The ability to detect symptoms of brain infection early in the course of the disease will benefit not only the individual patient, but also will help us understand more about the disease itself", he continued.

Dr. Becker lives with his wife, a psychiatric epidemiologist, and two sons, (age 3 years and 8 months) in suburban Pittsburgh. He enjoys gardening and cooking, and has taken classes in Chinese cuisine from Anna Kao.

#### PROUD OF PITTSBURGH: A PERSONAL NOTE

*from Tony Silvestre*

Having been a Pittsburgher only three years I was shocked to be chosen the Lambda Awards Man of the Year. I have given a good deal of thought to the award lately. My first response was to be somewhat embarrassed and to say that I did not deserve it. But I have concluded that I do (just as, at least, another dozen men in town do as well). I deserve it partly because I have worked hard to represent the work, energy and time of a

few thousand Pittsburghers concerned about AIDS.

I came to Pittsburgh via Philadelphia, State College, Boston, Albany, Wilmington and the Bronx. I have met thousands of gay people and attended more meetings than anyone ever should. But in all those travels, I have not seen anything like Pittsburgh's gay community response to AIDS. When we started our study, there were four cases of AIDS in Allegheny County. Many thought Pittsburgh would be spared the ravages of the disease. Despite that, thousands of Pittsburgh's gay men stepped forward to help the research needed to get some answers to this dreadful disease. These men continue to come forward and give their time because they care. Unlike many other cities, local bars here have opened their doors to education. Organizations like the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force have grown quickly and with much promise. Existing groups like Persad, MCC and Dignity have developed new programs to assist people with AIDS.

When the history of the AIDS epidemic is written, I am sure that the generosity of Pittsburgh's gay community will be noted. We overcame indifference and fear. We stepped forward to make a difference and help find the solution. And for that, we are all men of the year.

#### PMS JOB OPENINGS

**NURSE PRACTITIONER/PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT.** Positions open immediately for a licensed nurse practitioner or physician's assistant to perform general and neurologic physical examinations, interviews and phlebotomy in PMS clinic. Experience in treatment of STD's a plus. Call Ric Witt at 412-624-2008 for more information.

**SECRETARY/SCHEDULER.** Position open immediately for an individual to perform general secretarial services, and to help to schedule appointments for PMS volunteers. Experience in crisis intervention, hot-line assistance are a plus. Call Tom Howard at 412-624-2008 for more information.