AIDS kills 202 in Louisiana

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), the dreaded disease of the decade, is the major cause of 202 deaths in Louisiana, announced Dr. Sandra Robinson, state health officer and secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources.

According to Dr. Robinson, AIDS, which mainly strikes homosexual/bisexual men, hemophiliacs, and intravenous drug users, was first reported in Louisiana in 1979. Today, a total of 303 cases have been reported with a death rate of 67 percent.

“Of the 303 AIDS cases, 246 or 87 percent are homosexual or bisexual men. Intravenous (IV) drug users comprise 9 percent; hemophiliacs, 2 percent: heterosexual contact, two percent; transfusions, 9 percent; and unknown or none of the above, 15 percent. The cause of the remaining 15 percent is still unknown,” explains Dr. Robinson.

She notes, “Recent statistics reveal a racial breakdown of 210 whites, 78 blacks, 9 Hispanics and two other/unknown.”

So far,” she says, “four cases have been reported in children under 5-13 and two for the 13-19 age category. The majority of AIDS victims (144) are between the ages of 30 and 39.”

She emphasizes, “AIDS is spread by sexual contact, needle sharing, or less commonly, through transfused blood or its components. Casual contact with AIDS patients or infected persons does not place others at risk for getting the illness.”

To prevent contraction of the deadly disease, Dr. Robinson recommends not having sex with multiple partners or with persons who have had multiple partners; avoiding sex with persons who have AIDS, members of the risk groups or persons who have had a positive result on the HTLV-III antibody test; using condoms to reduce the possibility of transmitting the virus; avoiding oral-genital practices or practices which may injure tissues such as anal intercourse; and avoiding the use of IV drugs.

For further information regarding AIDS, contact the Public Information Bureau at 504-342-1532.