UMC set to dispense AIDS medications

By Bill Decker
Staff Writer

University Medical Center begins dispensing eight AIDS-related medications Monday, part of the hospital's expanding role in AIDS treatment in Acadia.

Beginning Monday, UMC will be one of nine state medical centers to provide the medications to HIV-infected people and people with full-blown AIDS. Within a year, UMC Director Larry Dorsey said, the Lafayette hospital will probably have a new building to house its own AIDS clinic for patients with AIDS and other infectious diseases.

Four such clinics are planned. In addition to UMC, they will be at state medical centers – formerly called charity hospitals – in New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Shreveport. UMC will be responsible for patients in its own seven-parish area as well as the five extreme southwestern parishes.

Dorsey said the clinics are a state response to the large number of patients in the AIDS program at New Orleans' Medical Center of Louisiana.

"It means that a lot of patients won't have to go to New Orleans," said Wayne Moeller of Lafayette CARES, a local testing and counseling service. "It'll make it much easier."

Dorsey said UMC already sees about 80 AIDS patients. And "the number is growing. There's a potential that in the long run, we'll see more than 300."

That includes only people with AIDS. The clinic will also treat people who are infected with HIV, the virus linked to AIDS, but have yet to develop AIDS symptoms.

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AIDS: Medications set

Dorsey said the clinic will offer a range of out-patient services. "We'll be able to do at one clinic what we now do at various parts of the hospital," he said.

UMC will begin providing the eight medications Monday for people who don't have Medicaid or other medical coverage. The Department of Health and Hospitals, which runs the state HIV Program Office, says people who have such coverage should continue to get the drugs from private pharmacies.

The DHH says patients at the state medical centers will pay according to a sliding scale, and that no one will be denied medication because of inability to pay.

The DHH also encouraged AIDS and HIV patients who don't receive continuing care at the state medical centers to enroll at one of the clinic sites. For information about the UMC program, call 261-6750.

The drugs that will be dispensed are:

- Didanosine (Videx) (DDI).
- Retrivr (Zidovudine) capsules and syrup.
- Acyclovir (Zovirax) capsules.
- Chlotrimazole (Myclex) Troches.
- Interferon Alpha (Intron A).
- Dapsone.
- Pentamidine IV/Aerosol.
- TMP/Sulfa tablets and syrup (Bactrim or Septra).