

begins syphilis has become systemic — it is in the blood cells and is traveling all over the body:

Primary syphilis is difficult to diagnose because a blood test doesn't always work. The only symptom is a

There are no symptoms to latent syphilis until the very end of the stage. A person may not notice any symptoms for 20 years or longer.

But latent syphilis eventually results in heart disease, brain or spinal

The disease remains localized for quite some time and it is weeks or months before it becomes systemic, invading other parts of the body.

If untreated, the bacteria spreads through the body and can cause

If a pregnant woman has gonorrhea the baby may be blinded while passing through the birth canal. This is not as big a problem as it once was since antibacterial drops are now put in all babies' eyes as soon as they are born.

seven times with VD," Underwood said, "and he just doesn't care."

"According to Underwood, contracting the disease more than once is no joke, because damage will be done even in the first few days of the infection, before treatment.

"That young man probably won't live until he's thirty."

He said each infection causes some scar tissue and in a man this will eventually cause a stricture of the urinary

research is very important. Perhaps someday there will be a vaccine for the disease. But until the public is educated in the extent of the disease and the problems involved in ending the epidemic, it will be difficult to raise much money, he said.

He added that VD is a social problem, not just a disease, and public apathy only worsens the situation.

"The tragedy of VD is that it's the most preventable disease that I know of."

## the cure . . . and where to get it.

by Michael (O.J.) Nelson

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of penicillin.

That might be a way to sum up the thinking of the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department. According to Lester Jensen, health department education director, education is the best way to combat the spread of venereal disease.

This is the reasoning behind such programs as the "VD Blues" telecast and the rash of brochures, magazine and newspaper articles.

It is also the reasoning behind the health department's own program to inform junior and senior high schoolers about the causes and symptoms of syphilis and gonorrhea. Jensen said representatives of his department spoke to more than 400 students last year.

"When we go into a classroom," he said, "we find the students are more honest than they were in the past. If you try and moralize to them they'll tell you to go to hell. So, we don't give them the purity stuff."

The program is organized around a discussion session. Often, the kids get so involved that the talk has to be stopped, Jensen said. "If we didn't stop it, it'd go all night."

He said today's youth are more knowledgeable than when he was their age. Just the same, he said, they often don't use good judgment.

"If they had experience and judgment," he said, "they'd be just great. But experience doesn't always mean good judgment. I know a lot of people my age (64 years) who've had a lot of experience and they're still damned fools."

But if education fails to stop people from contacting the diseases, he said, there is always penicillin. It has almost become as traditional as cherry pie. Penicillin, and its derivatives are among the most common antibiotics used today. They've been used to combat venereal disease since 1943.

If a person is allergic to penicillin, he or she can be treated with a number of other drugs, according to Celeste Knipmeyer, UHS community health nurse. Only one of the drugs, tetracycline, is given orally, she said. The others are all injections.

A male will not be given penicillin or other antibiotics unless his problem has been definitely diagnosed as VD.

For the average man, the diagnosis test is about as painless as the treatment.

A blood sample is taken to test a man

for syphilis. If syphilis is diagnosed, he is given penicillin.

Gonorrhea testing for a man is somewhat different. A man infected with gonorrhea he will have a pus-like discharge from his penis. A smear from this discharge is taken and is then inspected under a microscope. If the disease does not show up upon inspection, a culture is done and then incubated for 48 hours.

Knipmeyer said a gonorrhea test for a woman is uncomfortable but not painful. The test involves a pelvic examination. A smear is then taken from the pus-like discharge which originates in the infected cervix.

Even if a woman is infected, she said, there is only a 50 per cent chance the disease will show up on a smear. If it does not show up, a culture is taken. Like the male test, it is incubated for 48 hours.

Ten per cent of the women who have the disease still don't test out as positive on the culture, she said. If the doctor believes a woman has gonorrhea even though all the tests are negative, she said, a penicillin shot is given.

Once a person receives treatment for VD, she said, University Health requests that he or she not drink alcoholic beverages for three days. It also recommends the person not have intercourse for at least one week.

A follow-up examination is given a week after treatment, she added.

One of the most important aspects in stopping the spread of VD is contact counseling. Both UHS and the Lancaster-Lincoln Health Department use this technique.

Both of the counselors are professionally trained, Jensen and Knipmeyer said. All information gathered is kept confidential they said.

"A big advantage we have today," Jensen said, "is that the kids are honest. We've used this professional contact interviewing since November of 1971. The doctors used to talk to those people who had V.D and some guys wouldn't tell who they had had sex with. That made our job impossible."

He said patients would occasionally say they had gotten the disease in a dirty bathroom.

"The only way you can get gonorrhea is through having sex," he said. So, when people would tell the doctor that they had got it in a bathroom, the doctor would say something like 'that's a helluva place to have sex.'"

### University Health Service <sup>446</sup>

Address: UNL campus, 15th and U St.  
Price: tests, gonorrhea—\$3 for men, \$5.50 for women; syphilis—\$2 either sex. Treatment and drugs, free.

Time: 8 am - 10 pm

Typical UHS hassle (forms, waiting, etc.), but confidential.

### VD Clinic <sup>446</sup>

Sponsored by the State Health Department

Address: 3830 Adams (Family Planning building)

Price: Tests, treatment and drugs are free

Time: 7 pm - 9 pm Thursdays

Minimal hassle, confidential.

### Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department

Address: 2200 St. Marys (north of Lincoln General Hospital)

Price: Tests, treatment and drugs are free.

Time: 1 pm Tuesdays and Fridays (appointment recommended)

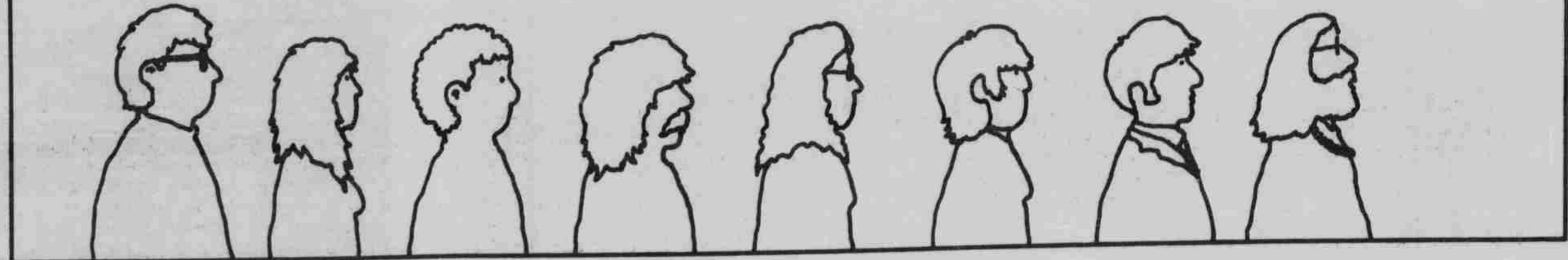
Some hassle, known violations of patients' confidence.

### Equilibria

Address: 4924 Poppleton Ave., Omaha  
Price: Tests, treatment and drugs are free.

Time: 7 pm - 10:30 pm every day but Sunday; 1 pm - 5 pm Monday, Wednesday and Saturday

Young people run program, no hassles, confidential.



## The homosexual and VD

Homosexuality and venereal disease? The relationship between the two was almost ignored 10 years ago. But the homosexual is coming out of the closet and medical personnel are starting to pay more attention to their problems.

A heterosexual relationship is not necessary for the spread of syphilis or gonorrhea. In fact, those who have same-sex relationships are more likely to

contact one or both.

National studies of homosexuality show that most homosexual males have more sexual contact with a larger number of partners than their heterosexual counterparts. Females reportedly are not as promiscuous.

According to James Elias, a member of the National Commission on Venereal Disease, many homosexual males have as

many as 15 sexual partners each week. However, he says the average is less than five.

In a speech delivered to the 1971 International Venereal Disease Symposium, Elias said many homosexuals do not support the medical profession in its efforts to curb the spread of the disease. He said gay people are suspicious of a profession which has traditionally had a negative attitude towards same-sex relationships.

Fear of harassment from legal authorities is another reason gays

sometimes neither seek treatment nor divulge their contacts. According to Lester Jensen, Lancaster-Lincoln County Health Department education director, these fears are groundless.

Homosexuals in Lincoln are less likely to contact VD than those in many large cities, he said. He explained that the lack of gay bars in town lowers the likelihood of homosexuals making numerous contacts.

"I doubt if we've seen more than five homosexuals during the last three years," he said. But, he added, homosexuality is

turn outside