

# HIV, cancer link proposed

■ A UNL researcher is studying the transmission of the two viruses.

By MICHELLE STARR  
Staff writer

A UNL researcher may have found a link between the transmission of a virus commonly found in people infected with HIV and Kaposi's Sarcoma, a skin cancer.

Charles Wood, a molecular virologist, in collaboration with researchers from the University of Miami and the University of Zambia, hopes to find a way to stop the spread of the Herpes Virus Type VIII, which would stop the skin cancer.

Only people infected with the Herpes Type VIII virus are able to develop Kaposi's Sarcoma, Wood said.

The cancer, which is characterized by red or purple lesions on the skin or around mucous membranes, spreads to other organs such as the lungs or liver.

The researchers have found that the transmission of the Herpes virus is similar to the transmission of the HIV virus, Wood said.

Their research might be used to find a way to stop the transmission of HIV, Wood said.

The research, which started in September 1998, is focusing on the number of HIV patients suffering from

Herpes Type VIII; people that have Herpes Type VIII and Kaposi's; and people not infected with HIV but who have Kaposi's Sarcoma in the United States and Africa, said Hmakwa Mantina, a researcher from the University of Miami working on the project.

The Herpes Type VIII virus, discovered in 1994, is the most recent herpes virus found.

"It's quite interesting. Not only is it the newest (herpes) virus, but it's linked to HIV, AIDS and cancer — specifically Kaposi's Sarcoma," Wood said.

Not everyone infected with the Herpes Type VIII virus will get cancer. Under the conditions of a suppressed immune system, such as in people infected with HIV and Herpes Type VIII, patients are more susceptible to Kaposi's Sarcoma, Wood said.

"It's a risk factor. That's what we could say at this point," Wood said.

Wood found that in the United States, between 50 to 70 percent of HIV patients have Kaposi's Sarcoma cancer, compared to a 5 to 10 percent infection rate in people not infected with HIV, Woods said.

Woods began his research in the United States four years ago and expanded to Africa because there is an increase in Herpes Type VIII and Kaposi's Sarcoma.

"It's one of the most common cancers for AIDS," Wood said.

In Africa, Wood found a 40 percent infection rate of Kaposi's Sarcoma

among the people not infected with HIV.

More than 30 percent of the population is infected with HIV and AIDS, and of those people, 90 percent of them have Kaposi's Sarcoma, Wood said.

"It's a major problem in African countries. One in three are infected with HIV," Wood said.

The number of patients with Kaposi's Sarcoma is lower in the United States because of the HIV-suppressant drugs, Wood said.

Wood found that about 40 to 50 percent of HIV-infected individuals carry the Herpes Type VIII virus in both Africa and the United States, Wood said.

Mantina said he began the research because he is from Africa and worked as a doctor for cancer patients.

Wood will continue his research looking at whether Kaposi's Sarcoma is connected to the Herpes Type VIII virus by studying infants exposed to the virus to see if they develop the cancer as they get older.

"If we can block the virus, we can block the disease," Wood said.

## Stenberg: Reconsideration of grain merger necessary

By JAKE BLEED  
Senior staff writer

State Attorney General Don Stenberg asked the Justice Department on Oct. 21 to reconsider the approval of a merger between the first and third largest grain exporters in the nation.

The Justice Department approved the merger of Cargill Inc. and Continental Grain on Nov. 10, 1998, creating the world's largest grain exporting company.

The merger took place for an undisclosed amount, adding Continental to Cargill; the nation's largest privately owned business before the merger.

The attorney general asked the district court of the District of Columbia, which is currently considering the merger, to appoint someone to review the merger and make a recommendation to the court, an attorney general's office press release said.

Stenberg argued the merger of Cargill and Continental would tighten entry of other agricultural companies into the market and, in general, be anti-competitive.

Deputy Attorney General Steve Grasz said prices on agricultural goods would be lower if the merger is allowed, a factor the Justice Department did not consider entirely.

"(Cargill and Consolidated) would

“*(The Justice Department) didn't seem to look at the bigger picture.*”

STEVE GRASZ  
deputy attorney general

be in a situation where they did not have real competition," Grasz said. "(The Justice Department) didn't seem to look at the bigger picture."

Justice Department officials said they could not comment on the merger.

But according to a press release, the Justice Department required both companies to sell grain elevators and railroad terminals across the nation to lessen the pair's combined market power.

Specifically, the Justice Department targeted port and river elevators under the authorization of the Chicago Board of Trade in Illinois.

"This concentration would have increased the risk that prices for Chicago Board of Trade corn and soybean futures contracts could be manipulated," the Justice Department press release said.

## 'Blair' burgh prepares for holiday

BURKITTSVILLE, Md. (AP) — The Blair Witch believers are back, just in time for Halloween. And this time, Burkittsville is ready.

Last summer, curiosity seekers overran the startled western Maryland hamlet where the hit hoax horror film, "The Blair Witch Project," is set.

They snatched road and cemetery signs and vandalized tombstones, prompting a beefed-up police presence in the quiet farming community.

Burkittsville has since wised up — and cashed in.

With the movie's recent release on home video and with Halloween this weekend, many of the 214 townsfolk are embracing — rather than bracing for — another wave of what local artist


Trude Head calls "the Blair Witch virus."

Roll into town on the narrow road over South Mountain, and you'll see a hand-lettered cardboard sign, "WITCH STUFF," on a telephone pole near Head's 200-year-old yellow house.

Her sidewalk display offers \$7 versions of the rocks and stick-figure totems featured in the film.

So is Margaret Kennedy, a painter and gallery owner whose sales have zoomed since she started selling Blair Witch T-shirts and totems to tourists.

Up and down Main Street, the Blair Witch has become a cottage industry, supported by several Internet sites and a market that expanded with the movie's international release and video sales.




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