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## EXPECTED NEW DEFINITION OF AIDS COULD DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS WITH AIDS IN 1992: TEENS AND WOMEN MOST VULNERABLE

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"I think sometimes we think only gay people can get it...it's not gonna happen to me. And here I am saying that it can happen to

anybody. Even me. Magic Johnson."

-- Magic Johnson, Nov. 7, 1991

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 27 -- It is expected that in early 1992 the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta will expand the definition of AIDS to include those who test HIV positive and have a T-Cell count of 200 or less. This expected new AIDS definition could double the number of AIDS cases in this country from approximately 190,000 to 380,000. One hundred and twenty thousand have already died, a death toll which exceeds the number of soldiers killed in Desert Storm and Vietnam combined. It is said that 2 out of every 11,000 teenagers are infected with the HIV virus and don't know it. According to the American Red Cross, 1 out of every 5 people with AIDS is 20-30 years old. No one knows how many were infected in their teens because it may take 10 years or longer before they get sick. Women are now the fastest growing group infected with HIV. It is estimated that 10-12 percent of the nation's AIDS cases are now women. When the new definition of AIDS goes into effect in early 1992, that number is expected to escalate. All told, there are over 1 million HIV positive people in America today. Seventy-five percent of the people around the world who are infected with the virus were infected through heterosexual sex. Eight to 10 million adults around the world are now infected with HIV, and it is predicted that 40 million adults and children will be infected by the year 2000.

"Fifty Things You Can Do About AIDS" (Lowell House, November 1991) is a handbook for anyone who ever wanted to do something about AIDS but didn't know how to begin. It is a guide to specific and simple actions you can take to help, in the office or at home;

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whether you have money to burn, or no money at all; time on your hands, or no time to spare. Written by a principal AIDS caregiver and AIDS volunteer, the simple suggestions and ideas are loving, practical, easy, time-effective and inexpensive. This is a book for the lay person by a lay person. Because AIDS is not just a gay issue. AIDS is everyone's problem. Anyone who cares can make a difference by implementing just one or more of the following suggestions:

If you have contact with a PWA (Person With AIDS):

- Don't wear perfume. Many PWAs have a heightened sense of smell and are vulnerable to sinus and other infections.
- Don't set the temperature too low on your thermostat at the office. PWAs are particularly vulnerable to catching colds.
- Lower the wattage of the light bulbs in your home or office if you live or work with someone with AIDS. Many PWAs have had their eyesight impaired and are sensitive to bright lights.
- When you invite a PWA into your home, put away your pets. Birds and cats carry diseases which can be harmful or fatal to a PWA. Kitty litter boxes can also be harmful.
- Learn which companies are AIDS friendly, and patronize them. Learn which companies are AIDS unfriendly and avoid them.
- Learn who in the Senate is supportive of AIDS and who is in opposition. Write to the senators in opposition and let them know how you feel. Lists and addresses are in the book.

Read this book and then tell someone you love to read it, too. The message here is that there is something you can do. You don't need a lot of time and money to help. All you need to do is follow one or more of the suggestions in this book and you can make a difference.

About the author:

Neal Hitchens is an AIDS volunteer and principal AIDS caregiver who has lost many friends to AIDS. He understands firsthand the needs and concerns of the PWA, and has written this book to help the average lay person better understand the practical, everyday solutions to this growing national health crisis as well as give much needed relief and comfort to the growing numbers of PWAs who need our help.

He is available for personal media interviews and for telephone interviews from his home in Los Angeles.

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