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AIDS and American Values
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It was 3 days since I last spoke publicly about AIDS.

I found while I was Surgeon General and later after I had left that office and was on the
Distinguished Lecture Circuit that speaking to a World Affairs Council in almost any city
was a great opportunity. The audience was usually intelligent, up on international health
affairs, concerned about prevention of disease and promotion of health here at home and
their question and answer sessions were always spirited and I learned as much as the
audience did. I had been asked to speak about AIDS and American values, which was a
little tangential from what my usual message on AIDS would have been.

I started by thanking them for their continued support for American’s leadership role in
international health, and suggested that this was a good time not to lose sight of the many
major health problems of the world, because of the pandemic of AIDS. The others were
still important and it was my intent to review them before getting into the subject of
AIDS. I did this by talking about the six major communicable diseases of childhood, the
five million children that die someplace in the world each year because of these diseases.
I did not forget to mention the children that survived the diseases, but carried the scars of
the disease with them for the rest of their lives. In laying the ground work for my later
discussion of AIDS, I made it clear that there was a vaccine for each of these diseases and
that most of them were fortunately virtually disappearing from our society as witness,
polio, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough. But even with this good news these same
vaccines have yet to penetrate all the villages and crossroads of the developing world. I
reported that the United States had been contributing substantially to the expanded
program on immunization, which was sponsored by the World Health Organization. And
that we had joined with WHO in identifying as well the major parasitic diseases as one of
the big targets of international science and health.

Examples were malaria, schistosomiasis (snail fever). Snail Fever is a global disease that
affects an estimated 180 million people...a staggering burden for the human race.

Then there is trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), one of the diseases always mentioned
in the steamy jungle novels of the last century, but present day measures, although
improving the situation are inadequate and statistics indicate that sleeping sickness is on
the rise. Unlike malaria and snail fever, sleeping sickness is usually fatal unless the
patient is in the earliest signs of the disease; in the places where this occurs that early
treatment usually does not happen.

I also mentioned rehydration therapy, which although not new has done a tremendous
amount to save youngsters who would ordinarily have died of diarrhea in the days when
we thought that only intravenous fluids could be used.

I reminded the audience that I was not only the their Surgeon General, but also the
Director of the Public Health Service Office of International Health, and that I was
pleased to report to them that as I traveled the world about, I was constantly reminded to
the extend to which the United States is regarded as a beacon of good sense and good
science by the rest of the world. These nations sorely needed us as, indeed, we needed
them and that was especially true in the pandemic of AIDS.

I then launched into AIDS and said that nothing that I hadn’t said in the past three
lectures, although I might have tilted my remarks just a little for this audience, constantly
reminding them that AIDS knows no borders, that it might have come from Africa by
way of the Caribbean, and that it would never be fully contained in this country as long as
it was not also contained elsewhere in the world.

That gave me the opportunity to say as I had said before that the United States must pay
its full assessment to the United Nations in order to enable the World Health
Organization to be an effective world leader in the fight against AIDS.

I also thought it was a good audience to tell that in the 6 years since the AIDS epidemic
began, more than 24,000 Americans had died of AIDS, but just that last month – and
every month – 29,000 people in American died because they smoked cigarettes. Again
for this audience especially I made it clear that we permit, condone, and actively promote
the increased consumption of American brand-name cigarettes throughout the third
world.

I used some of the format I had used in the recent lecture I gave to the movie industry and
left a lot of questions unanswered because I thought the audience with its international
health background was wise enough to provide most of the answers and understand how
serious a problem was the global disease of AIDS.

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Comparison of mortality of AIDS in 6 years vs. mortality from smoking per month
Confidentiality of records
Cost of clinical care to AIDS patients
Cost per patient per year
Criteria for eligibility to receive public services
Dangers of immuno suppression in HIV carriers
Diphtheria
Disproportionate occurrence of AIDS & racial Minorities
Drug addiction, liver failure, & lung cancer
Drug test for AIDS
“Expanded program of immunization”
Failure of professional people to provide care to AIDS patients
Government’s total commitment to provide for “The General welfare of the United States”
High-risk behavior & AIDS
Homosexual & bisexual men
Major parasitic diseases
Malaria
Need of U.S. to pay its full contribution to the United Nations
Need to report HIV positive patients to protect them
Origin of AIDS in Africa?
Polio
Predictions of caseload in the future
Prejudice against AIDS patients
Privacy vs. the need to protect the community from danger
Public demand second-class care for AIDS
Public health policy in reference to AIDS records
Schistosomiasis
Six major communicable diseases of childhood
Slowness of vaccines to penetrate the developing world
Social sequellae to discrimination against AIDS Patients
Taxpayers support of alcoholics, drug addicts & syphilitics
Taxpayers support of child health programs
Taxpayers support of diabetes
Taxpayers support of hypertension screening programs
Tetanus
Treatment of AIDS as labor intensive
Trypanosomiasis

United States as a beacon of good sense & good science

Vaccines
Virtual disappearance of the vaccine preventable diseases
Whooping cough

Office of International Health of Public Health Service
World Health Organization (WHO)