

# RANDOM SAMPLES

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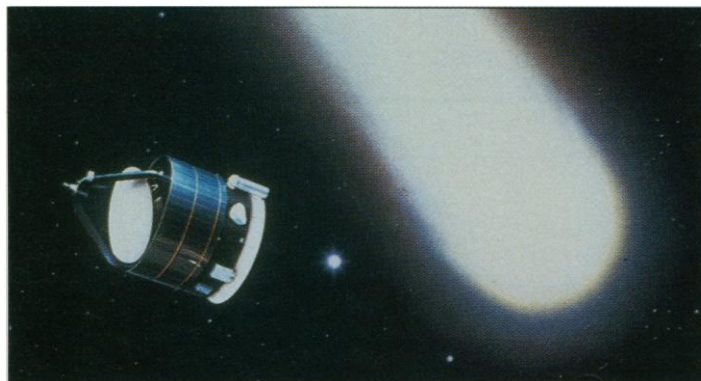
## Living Dangerously After an AIDS Test

"If I were fated to get AIDS, I'd have it already," rationalize a significant minority of gay men who continue to practice unsafe sex after discovering they're HIV negative. Others, after learning they're HIV positive, think: "I'm going to die anyway; I might as well have fun." So reports psychiatrist David G. Ostrow, director of the University of Michigan's Midwest Biobehavioral Research Center. Ostrow thinks he knows why and has proposed a way for health care workers to predict who might need counseling to avoid risky behavior after being tested.

To get a sense of the size of the problem, Ostrow did a study of 117 gay or bisexual men, which he presented at the Eighth International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam last week. After study participants were tested for the AIDS virus, Ostrow found that most of them engaged in safe sex, regardless of whether or not they carried the virus. But 21% of the men still engaged in high-risk sex, defined in the study as "unprotected, receptive anal intercourse with multiple partners."

According to a psychological profile that Ostrow compiled, the risk-takers tended to feel more depressed and isolated than the men who practiced safe sex—in fact they were twice as likely to have a history of suicidal thoughts. In addition, they tended to be less educated and to have lower incomes.

Those findings might help counselors identify men likely to engage in risky sex, says Ostrow. "Many cities are reluctant to offer mental health services to people getting HIV-antibody testing for fear of massive costs," he notes, "but everyone may not need extensive counseling." A brief questionnaire before an HIV test might help health workers determine who needs counseling. This, in turn, would help conserve limited resources, says Ostrow.



**Is Giotto heading for the Big Sleep?** European Space Agency (ESA) officials put the comet-chasing spacecraft into hibernation mode shortly after its 10 July encounter with comet Grigg-Skjellerup, and they're not sure they'll have the money to wake it up. But in case they do, ESA scientists are planning an encounter with a familiar celestial object, perhaps the moon.

Even if this is the end for Giotto, it has more than met ESA's expectations. Although its camera was permanently blinded by dust motes that bombarded it during its first mission—a flyby of Halley's comet in 1986 (*Science*, 28 March 1986, p. 1502)—Giotto's second comet encounter earlier this month "went much better than we expected," says Gerhard Schwehm, project scientist at the ESA center in Noordwijk, the Netherlands. Schwehm says Giotto scientists are tickled that the spacecraft managed to detect the comet's fore- and bow-shocks where ions streaming from the comet's icy nucleus slam into the solar wind.

Last week ESA scientists set Giotto on course for a rendezvous with Earth in 1999. If there's enough money, they'll use it for another mission, perhaps a peek at the moon's feeble magnetic field. But for now Giotto—and ESA scientists—can only dream of a 1999 wakeup call.

## Banking on Umbilical Cords

In the past few years, bone-marrow transplants have become increasingly important for treating leukemias, as well as fatal hereditary blood disorders such as Fanconi anemia. But there's a problem: Graft-versus-host disease now kills more than one-fourth of marrow transplant patients. Recent evidence suggests, however, that this problem may be alleviated by using umbilical cord blood, instead of bone marrow itself, as the source of the stem cells needed to repopulate the patients' marrow. And that's resulting in efforts both here and in Europe to set up the first cord blood banks.

Since 1988, a handful of children suffering from fatal blood disorders have received life-saving transplants of umbilical cord blood. But since hematologists thought that a single umbilical cord couldn't supply enough stem cells to treat adults, bone-marrow transplants appeared to be the only option for many severely

ill leukemia patients.

Now a research team led by hematologist Jill Hows of Southmead Hospital in Bristol has reported in the 11 July *Lancet* that cell production in cultured cord blood is greater than in bone-marrow cultures. Similar results—in shorter-term cultures—have come from a U.S. group led by Hal Broxmeyer at Indiana University. Both groups' tentative conclusion: Adult cord blood transplants should work fine.

Armed with these results, hematologist Eliane Gluckman of the St. Louis Hospital in Paris, Hows, and a Bristol colleague, Ben Bradley, plan to ask the European Community and private foundations to fund a 3-year, \$2 million project to set up a cord blood bank that would hold 10,000 samples. In the United States, similar moves are already afoot. Pablo Rubinstein of the New York Blood Center will soon receive a 3-year, \$4.5 million NIH grant to compile another 10,000-sample bank. A commercial bank is also being planned in New York by Biocyte Corp.

## Where the Okapi and the Antelope Play

Years of effort by a pair of World Conservation International (WCI) scientists, John and Terese Hart, may have helped save one of the world's most exotic tropical forests, the Ituri forest of Zaire.

Covering almost 40,000 square miles, this mysterious rain forest is home to the Mbuti—one of the best-known pygmy tribes in Africa—and the giraffe-like okapi, a creature so elusive that it was only discovered in 1902. These inhabitants of the rain forest have been threatened in recent years by hunting, logging, and gold prospecting conducted by settlers who've been pouring in from the overcrowded eastern highlands of Zaire.

But good news came this month. The Zairean government, after long resisting the idea, announced that it would set aside a 5000-square-mile tract of forest—an area the size of Connecticut—as the Okapi Wildlife Reserve.

Much of the credit goes to conservationists like the Harts, who have been studying the okapi for 20 years and who have lobbied the government to protect the forest and its inhabitants, which include elephants, leopards, and 10 species of forest antelopes. Recently, they and fellow conservationists raised about \$1 million for the project from a range of donors—including the World Wildlife Fund, the Robert Wood Johnson Jr. Charitable Trust, and Tabazaire, a Zairean company that markets "Okapi" cigarettes.



**The elusive okapi.** A rare shot of the beast in the wild.