

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are the result of discussions with various people concerned with the need for the implementation of a clear policy on AIDS. The policy that is finally adopted and the way in which it is implemented requires careful consideration and a broad consensus. This article is not intended to be conclusive. It is presented here for debate.

Screening recommendations

Compulsory pre-marital screening is not advisable as very few people in this group would be expected to carry the virus. There is a strong case for compulsory screening in blood, semen and live organ donors provided these donors have given consent and have received counselling. Strict confidentiality should be maintained. The same applies for compulsory screening in patients on "kidney machines" and people staffing these units.

Women involved in promiscuous sexual behaviour (eg prostitutes) who are thinking of having babies or who are in the early stages of pregnancy should be strongly advised to have a test. This advice should include counselling and the choice of terminating the pregnancy if the test shows HIV antibodies in the blood.

HIV testing in prisons should be done only for the purposes of diagnosis, ethical epidemiological studies or on demand. The primary policy for prevention of HIV transmission amongst prisoners should centre around education, counselling, the provision of condoms and the prevention of prison rape.

If screening is used by life insurance companies to deny cover, alternate schemes must be offered by the state. Procedures to ensure strict confidentiality must be instituted.

Voluntary testing programmes as opposed to compulsory screening should be developed and should be specifically designed for and targeted at those people involved in high risk activities. People who have had contact with infected individuals in ways that are likely to have resulted in transfer of the virus should be offered testing, counselling and education.

Health workers

Infection control policies to prevent transmission of infectious diseases should be practiced routinely when handling all potentially infected patients and health workers infected with HIV should be adequately compensated and their HIV status must remain confidential. All health care workers should accept a moral obligation to examine, treat and care for HIV infected patients provided appropriate infection control measures exist and are being practised. Education of health care workers about AIDS, HIV and the risk of infection should be given top priority. This education should aim at breaking down prejudiced responses towards infected individuals.

Children

As HIV infection is not yet widespread in the "under 5" population in South Africa, the results of further research should be awaited before deciding on a policy for the immunisation of symptomatic HIV positive children. Centrally stored breast milk is sometimes collected from nursing mothers to feed other babies. This practice should only be used where the mothers donating the milk are known not to carry the HIV virus.

Education campaigns

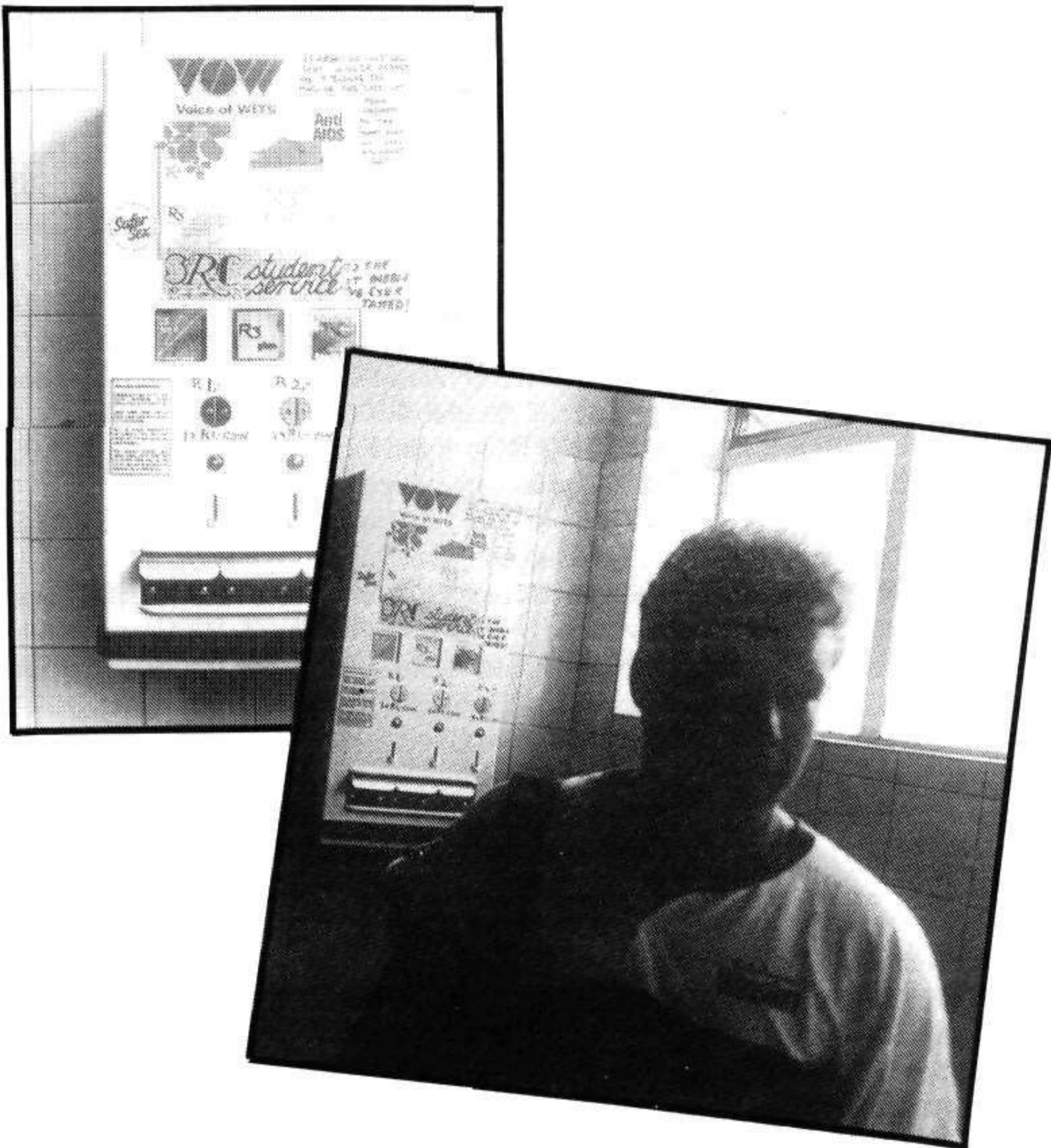
Before any education campaign is undertaken, a variety of experts should be asked for advice. These should include in particular, persons who are aware of cross-cultural and specific group needs. The education campaign should be conducted openly and should include basic sexual information.

All the facts that are made available to the authorities should be presented to the population at large in an understandable way.

Condoms and spermicides should be made generally and freely available. Any laws and circumstances (especially those which break up family life such as migrant labour) should be changed.

Responsibility

The state, in consultation with members of the broader community, should accept responsibility for control of HIV infection and AIDS. The people responsible for the state's programme as well as the way in which it will be funded, should be made known. The education strategy and framework within which it is to be developed and implemented must be clarified as a matter of urgency. An appropriate group for this



Condom machines have been installed at the University of the Witwatersrand

purpose must be set up immediately. This group should pursue a policy of complete openness at all stages.

Research into the psychological and social issues relating to AIDS and HIV infection should be given high priority. This should involve research into ways in which people's behaviour can be altered to prevent the spread of the disease. Adequate funding must be set aside for this purpose.

A LIST OF BOOKS ABOUT AIDS WHICH ARE AVAILABLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

- AVOIDING AIDS. WHAT EVERY SOUTH AFRICAN MAN AND WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PREVENTING INFECTION.** By V Leroux and Dr F Spracklen. Available for R4.95 at the CNA and Campus Book Shop, Johannesburg
- AIDS--THE DEADLY EPIDEMIC** By G Hanock and E Carim. Available for R11.95 at the CNA and Campus Bookshop, Johannesburg
- TEENAGE INFORMATION SERIES--AIDS** By A Kilpatrick and D Kilpatrick Available for R13.50 at Campus Bookshop, Johannesburg
- WOMEN AND THE AIDS CRISIS** By D Richardson. Available for R19.98 at Campus Bookshop, Johannesburg
- PANIC. THE STORY OF AIDS** By R McKie. Available for R9.95 at Exclusive Books, Johannesburg
- SEX, DRUGS AND AIDS** By O Wachter. Available for R9.95 at Exclusive Books, Johannesburg

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The attitudes and information contained in the above books do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial collective.