

HIV ANTIBODIES IN BEGGAR BLOOD DONORS IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL – II.

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Blood transfusions in Brazil have in the past often been carried out without any control, and blood donation has been a source of income for a part of the indigent population.

Lately, in 1987, we carried out a study to evaluate the risk of AIDS transmission from blood collected of a group of brazilian beggars, most of them "professional" blood donors.

Our results indicated that an alarmingly high percentage of the beggars studied, notably those considered "professional" blood donors, were infected (M. I. Carvalho et al., 1987, *Mem. Inst. Oswaldo Cruz*, 82: 587-588).

In early 1988 another study was performed involving 133 beggars. Of these, 117 were male and 16 female, with average ages 42.5 and 44.5 years, respectively. Of the males, 10 were homossexuals, 14 bisexual and the rest heterosexual. Only six of the males were intravenous drug abusers.

All the beggars were volunteers, agreeing to be bled in order to be tested for evidence of blood transmissible infections, i. e., human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), syphilis and Chagas' disease (*Trypanosoma cruzi*).

The results are shown in the Table.

Of the beggars infected with HIV, none were "professional" blood donors. Four were homo-

sexual, one was bisexual and six said to be heterosexual (two of those were female). None was an intravenous drug abuser. Evidence for syphilis was found in 16 (12%), one of them a regular blood donor; one donor was positive for *T. cruzi* antibodies. Only 9 out of 133 were "professional" blood donors; none of them HIV positive, contrasting with the results found in 1987 when 70% of the beggars were "professional" blood donors, 7% of them HIV positive.

These data appear to indicate that action taken by the health authorities is contributing to a decrease in transfusional AIDS. However, we have to keep in mind that if these measures are not accompanied by a very strict quality control of the reagents currently used for the detection of blood transmissible diseases as well as of the proficiency of the laboratories involved, all efforts will be in vain.

TABLE

Number of beggars with evidence of infection

	HIV	Syphilis	Chagas
Blood donors (9)	0 (0%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)
Non-blood donors (124)	11 (8.8%)	15 (12%)	2 (1.6%)

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