

THE WEEK

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LETTERS

Arrest it now

WHILE in the rest of the world, AIDS is spreading in multiple ways, its spread in India is largely due to the lapses of the medical profession itself ('Silent killer', June 28). This, combined with the indifferent attitude of the government, could claim the lives of a large number of innocent people.

The government has no effective and concrete programme for education of the people about the AIDS menace, or for prevention of the spread of the disease or even for the care of AIDS patients. The best way to shake our doctors and nurses out of their indifference is to make the use of disposable syringes mandatory.

K.R. RUKMINI,
MADRAS.

THE cover story was highly educative. If the risk of contracting AIDS through blood transfusion is high, isn't there a possibility of the AIDS virus spreading through mosquitoes and other blood-sucking insects?

MARTIN PALLIATH,
THAIKKAL, KERALA.

THE report could not have been better timed. But the claim that burs and several other dental instruments cannot even be sterilised betrays a pathetic ignorance of dentistry. In fact, all dental instruments are sterilisable.

What we need in a country like India is not a "thermometer per patient" or "a needle for every patient"

but a realistic approach to the sterilisation procedures, keeping in mind the stark ground realities. The government should give clear-cut instructions to hospitals on cross-infection control procedures. Rather than focusing on the hospital-based infection, which accounts for less than 10 per cent of HIV's spread, the AIDS epidemic should be viewed as a social malady.

DR S. ANIL,
TRIVANDRUM.

IT is not only the patients receiving blood transfusion who are at risk; medical personnel who handle contaminated products and equipment are also exposed to the AIDS danger.

And the blame for transfusing unsafe blood lies not entirely with the doctors. As relatives of the patients are often reluctant to donate blood, doctors are compelled to use blood from professional donors. One way out of this sad situation is to encourage



voluntary blood donations.

DR MOHAMED BILAL DELVI,
BANGALORE.

PEOPLE really became aware of AIDS only when Hollywood's top star Rock Hudson died of it. Publicity about the disease seems to be a good way to prevent its spread. The precautions that the people have to take against the disease should be publicised through the media. There are several other ways to contain the disease. The West Bengal government has set a good example by organising AIDS awareness classes for policemen.

BHUPEN BASU,
CALCUTTA

YOUR cover story has perhaps saved my life or the life of someone I love.

K.S. IRSHAD AHMED,
VANIYAMBADI, TN.

IN many parts of the country, voluntary and private organisations are conducting blood donation camps and collecting blood without proper verification of the donor's health. This is a very dangerous practice and should be discouraged.

Transfusions cause two kinds of problems—transmission of diseases and immuno-suppression. Both risks can be eliminated if we adopt the current practice in many western countries, which incidentally are highly advanced in medical science. In these countries, weeks before a surgical operation, blood required for transfusion is collected from the patient himself and is used during the operation. But then, do all hospitals in India have good storage facilities?

DR K.P. DAVIS,
MALA, KERALA.