

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) have plagued the United States since 1981, and its incidence and prevalence have grown rapidly among minority populations ever since. However, many adolescents and young adults still do not understand the disease or the at-risk behaviors that can lead to its transmission, said Dr. Loretta Sweet Jemmott, a professor of nursing at the University of Pennsylvania and an expert on HIV prevention.

“Often, young adults simply do not want to hear that their behaviors can harm them,” Sweet Jemmott said. “They feel invulnerable. I try to show them that they are not, and that they need to protect themselves.”

Although African Americans make up 12.3 percent of the U.S. population, they have accounted for 40 percent of the almost 1 million AIDS cases diagnosed since the start of the epidemic and approximately half of the 43,171 cases diagnosed in 2003 alone, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

AIDS is caused by HIV, the virus that destroys the body’s ability to fight infections and certain cancers by killing or impairing immune-system cells. According to the health Web site BlackHealthCare.com, HIV infection can be transmitted in a variety of ways – most commonly by unprotected sexual contact with an infected partner. It is also spread through contact with infected blood, drug needles and syringes, as well as from infected mother to fetus through pregnancy, birth or breast-feeding.

“Young adults should be told everything about HIV and AIDS. We can’t sugarcoat it. We need to stop this epidemic as a community,” said Sweet Jemmott, who is nationally recognized for her award-winning programs and materials that address major issues such as sex, teen pregnancy, HIV, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, puberty and drugs. These programs aim to reduce HIV-risk-related behavior among African American adolescents and are implemented internationally.

Sweet Jemmott said young people often do not understand the links between behavior and consequences. “They need to be shown how one behavior can affect another. They need help figuring out how to be safe.

“We live in a difficult time today. Young adults are getting bombarded with messages from media, clothing, their peers and their partners – messages that encourage and glorify unsafe sexual practices,” Sweet Jemmott said. “There are too many negative messages out there. I try to get them to look at the right message.”

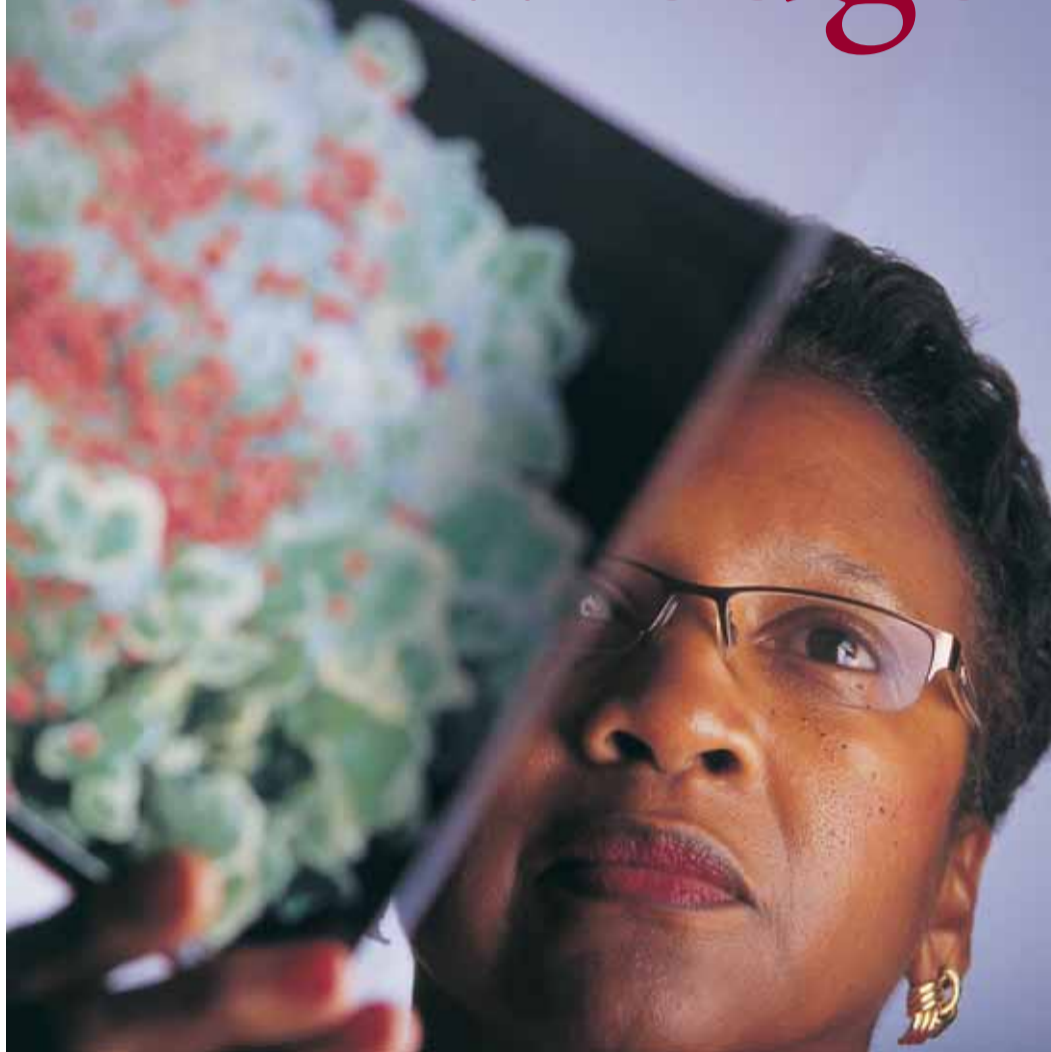
Her message is clear: Go out and get tested. “Get tested every six months. When it comes to HIV and AIDS, the earlier the diagnosis the better. The faster you receive treatment, the better your health outcomes will be,” she said.

Loretta Sweet Jemmott, Ph.D., R.N., F.A.A.N.

Professor of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania and expert on HIV prevention

Residence: Wynnewood, Pennsylvania

Knowledge



HIV and AIDS

“Young adults should be told everything about HIV and AIDS. We can’t sugarcoat it. We need to stop this epidemic as a community.”

FACT

By the end of December 2003, 195,891 African Americans with AIDS had died.

June 2006 STAGE OF LIFE – Young Adult

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 1968: Henry Lewis becomes first black musical director of an American symphony orchestra — New Jersey Symphony.	2 1971: Samuel L. Gravelly Jr. becomes first African American admiral in U.S. Navy.	3 1890: L.H. Jones patents corn harvester. 1904: Charles R. Drew, who developed process for preserving blood plasma, born.
4 1967: Bill Cosby receives an Emmy Award for his work in the television series <i>I Spy</i> . 1972: Activist Angela Davis acquitted of all murder and conspiracy charges.	5 1987: Dr. Mae C. Jemison becomes first African American woman astronaut.	6 1831: First annual People of Color convention held in Philadelphia.	7 1917: Poetess Gwendolyn Brooks, first black to win the Pulitzer Prize (poetry, 1950), born.	8 1953: Supreme Court ruling bans discrimination in Washington, D.C., restaurants.	9 1962: W.W. Braithwaite, poet, anthologist and literary critic, dies in New York City. 1995: Lincoln J. Ragsdale, pioneer fighter pilot of World War II, dies.	10 1854: James Augustine Healy, first black Roman Catholic bishop, is ordained a priest in Notre Dame Cathedral.
11 1964: Nelson Mandela sentenced to life imprisonment by South African government.	12 1963: Medgar W. Evers, civil rights leader, assassinated in Jackson, Mississippi.	13 1967: Thurgood Marshall nominated to Supreme Court by President Lyndon Johnson.	14 Flag Day 1864: Congress rules equal pay for all soldiers. 1927: George Washington Carver patents process of producing paints and stains.	15 1913: Dr. Effie O’Neal Ellis, first black woman to hold an executive position in the American Medical Association, born.	16 1970: Kenneth A. Gibson elected mayor of Newark, New Jersey, first African American mayor of a major Eastern city.	17 1775: Minuteman Peter Salem fights in the Battle of Bunker Hill.
18 Father’s Day 1942: Harvard University medical student Bernard Whitfield Robinson commissioned as the Navy’s first black officer.	19 1865: Blacks in Texas are notified of Emancipation Proclamation, issued in 1863. “Juneteenth” marks the event.	20 1953: Albert W. Dent of Dillard University elected president of the National Health Council.	21 1945: Col. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. becomes first black to command an Army Air Corps base.	22 1897: William Barry patents postmarking and cancelling machine.	23 1940: Sprinter Wilma Rudolph, winner of three gold medals at 1960 Summer Olympics, born.	24 1964: Carl T. Rowan appointed director of the United States Information Agency.
25 1941: Franklin D. Roosevelt issues executive order establishing Fair Employment Practices Commission.	26 1975: Dr. Samuel Blanton Rosser becomes first African American certified in pediatric surgery.	27 1991: Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall announces his retirement.	28 1864: Fugitive slave laws repealed by Congress. 1911: Samuel J. Battle becomes first black policeman in New York City.	29 1886: Photographer James Van Der Zee born.	30 1921: Charles S. Gilpin awarded Spingarn Medal for his performance in Eugene O’Neill’s <i>Emperor Jones</i> .	



The red ribbon became an international symbol of AIDS awareness during 1991. The organization Visual AIDS in New York, together with Broadway Cares and Equity Fights AIDS, established the wearing of a red ribbon as something that signified support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

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