

CORE IDEAS

Article title and page number: _____

Answer the following questions.

1. Share the central ideas and key details of the article in a brief summary.

2. How is this issue or event relevant today? Is it particularly relevant to young people? Cite evidence from the article to support your response.

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CORE IDEAS (continued)

3. Identify two words or phrases in the text that are unfamiliar to you. Write the meaning of each and cite any context clues from the text that help you determine their meanings.

4. Describe the author's point of view and/or purpose in writing this article. Cite evidence from the text.

5. Consider an accompanying element that supports the main text, such as a graph, timeline, separate article, or video. (Videos and other digital content are available at upfrontmagazine.com.) How does the second source contribute to your understanding of the topic? Compare and contrast the main text and accompanying element.

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1982

The AIDS Epidemic

Thirty years after scientists gave a frightening new disease its name, AIDS still afflicts millions of men and women around the world

BY LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN, M.D.

The patients had baffling problems. Many came in with painful white patches in their mouths. Others had swollen lymph nodes, purplish skin blotches, or uncommon infections of the lung or brain.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, doctors like myself began seeing a scattering of such cases in otherwise healthy young men in California and New York. (In addition to being a reporter for *The New York Times*, I'm a doctor.)

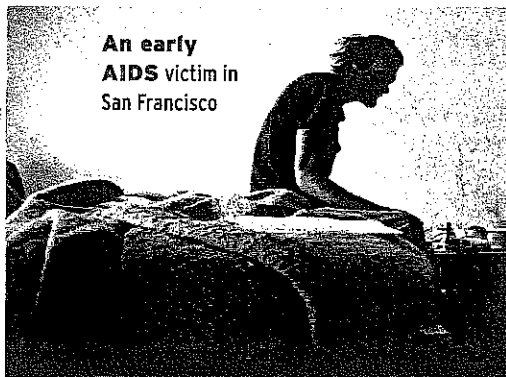
We could usually diagnose the individual conditions—for example, the skin blotches were Kaposi's sarcoma, a rare cancer—but we couldn't explain why these patients had developed these ailments or even agree on what to call the overall disease.

In August 1982—after more than 450 cases involving men and women in 23 states were reported—the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (C.D.C.) decided on acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS.

Thirty years later, AIDS has infected more than 60 million people worldwide

and has killed at least half that number in one of the worst epidemics in history. Teenagers today have grown up with little if any knowledge of the dark early days of AIDS. But they're worth recalling—as a reminder of both what can happen when confusion and fear surround a previously unknown disease, and of the changes and breakthroughs that the epidemic has brought about.

Looking back 30 years and with the wisdom of hindsight, it seems as if doctors, the public, journalists, and governments were shockingly slow to

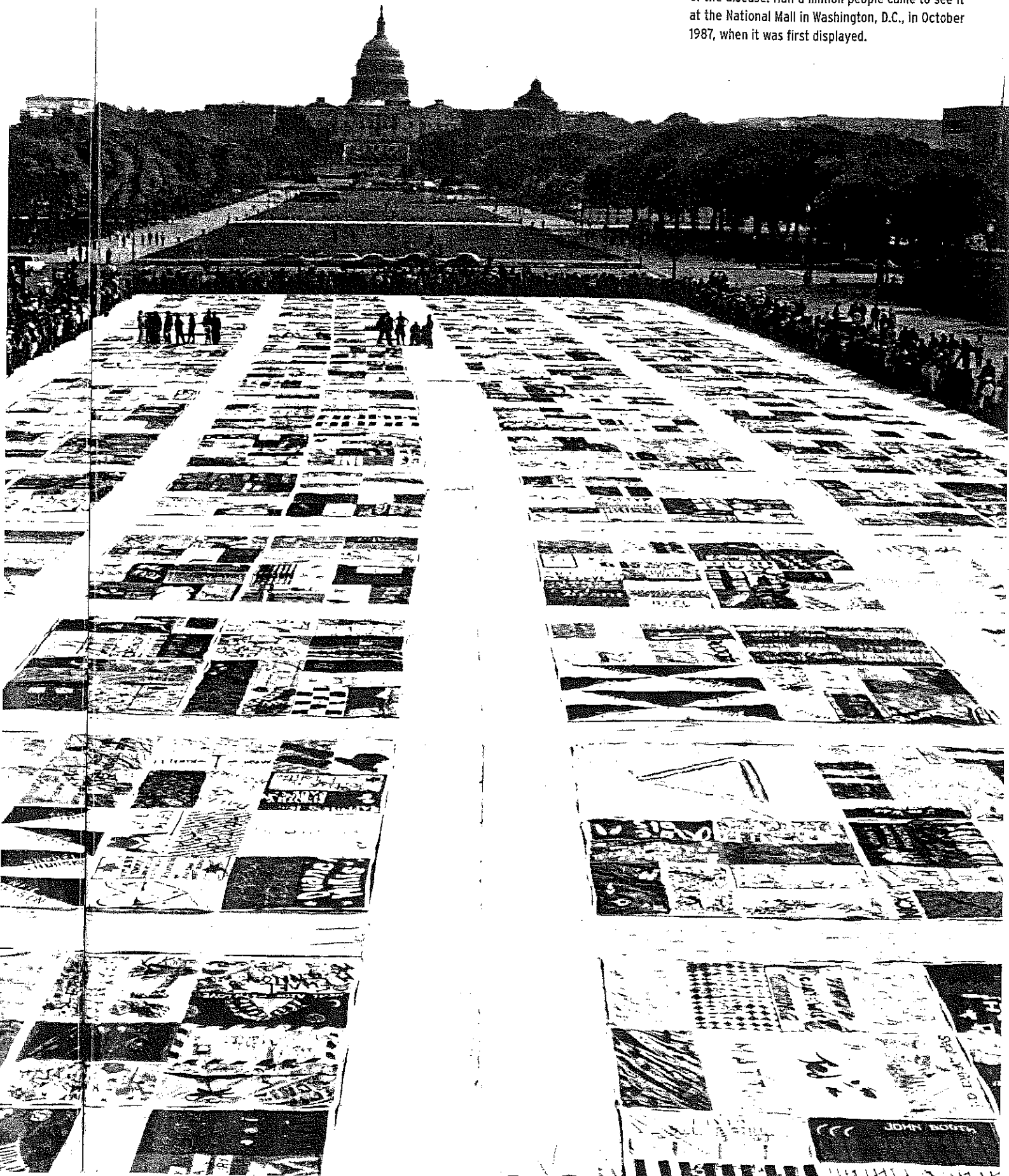


An early AIDS victim in San Francisco



PAUL FUSCO/MAGNUM PHOTOS (MAN WITH AIDS); SUSAN STEINKAMP/CORBIS (AIDS QUILT)

The AIDS Memorial Quilt, honoring victims of the disease. Half a million people came to see it at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in October 1987, when it was first displayed.



1980s

'Stigmatization'

- A.** A doctor checks the health of an AIDS patient in 1986.
- B.** New York parents and children protest the city's decision to allow a second-grader with AIDS to attend school.
- C.** Ryan White, 15, attends high school in Indiana despite protests aimed at keeping him out.



THREE DECADES OF AIDS

1980s-2000s

1990s

H.I.V. 'Cocktails'

- D.** L.A. Lakers star Magic Johnson retires in 1991 after announcing that he's H.I.V.-positive.
- E.** First-generation drug "cocktails" included up to 20 pills a day that had to be taken at precise times; they helped Magic Johnson and millions of others infected with H.I.V. live relatively normal lives.



2000s

Africa & AIDS Education

- F.** A girl stands by her mother's bed at an AIDS hospital in Ethiopia; Africa has been hit harder by the epidemic than other parts of the world (see chart, facing page).
- G.** Ricky Martin and Nicki Minaj have teamed up with Mac Cosmetics to educate young people about H.I.V./AIDS.



recognize an epidemic in the making and to take steps to try to contain it.

Because infectious diseases were no longer the major killers they had been even a few decades earlier, doctors had become overconfident. Smallpox had just become the first-ever disease to be eradicated, and most doctors overlooked a basic fact of biology: that a new infectious disease could appear at any time.

Researchers set out to investigate AIDS, but they were puzzled. Why were many of the earliest patients gay men? Could an infectious agent—something transmitted person to person—cause

AIDS? If so, what was it?

In 1983, the first report that a virus, now known as H.I.V. (human immunodeficiency virus), causes AIDS came from researchers in Paris.

Immune System Attacked

With new blood tests, scientists soon found that H.I.V. infects women and heterosexual men too, and that the virus usually lies dormant in the body for about 10 years before developing into AIDS. It thus became clear that AIDS had been silently spreading around the world in the 1970s.

Scientists learned that the disease could be transmitted in a number of ways: through sex, blood transfusions, needles and syringes used to inject drugs, and from mother to child in the womb.

In the early years, AIDS was an almost certain death sentence. A healthy immune system fights off disease, but what is so terrible about AIDS is that it attacks the immune system itself, making a person vulnerable to all kinds of fatal infections that a healthy immune system could fight off.

My worst fears about the magnitude of what was clearly a global epidemic

came in 1985, when I reported on AIDS in Africa. There the disease had begun to take a devastating toll on both men and women. Only a few African countries would let me in. Wherever I went, officials were in denial about the disease. A health official in Rwanda scoffed at the threat of AIDS in an interview. But later, in private, he questioned me closely about the disease because a member of his family had it.

Public Hysteria

Back in the U.S., because AIDS was often sexually transmitted, many people, including doctors, patients, and government officials, hesitated to speak frankly about it.

Public hysteria took hold of the country in the mid-1980s. Many people feared, without reason, that they could catch AIDS from drinking fountains and toilet seats or in restaurants.

"The '80s was an era of stigmatization," says Dr. Frank J. Bia of AmeriCares, a disaster-relief and humanitarian aid organization that delivers treatment to H.I.V. patients around the world.

At a number of schools around the country, parents protested the presence of students with AIDS. Ryan White, a hemophiliac in Kokomo, Indiana, contracted H.I.V. at age 13 from a blood transfusion. In 1985, parents at his school went to court to keep him out of the classroom, although health authorities said he posed no threat to other students. "All our children have to give up their right to a safe education for him," Faye Miller, a parent at Ryan's school, told *The Times*. After a lengthy legal battle, he won the right to stay in school.

Ryan became a spokesman on AIDS issues, trying to educate the public on how incorrect information about AIDS added to the plight of children with the disease. He died in 1990 at age 18, after Congress had passed a law named for him that paid for health care

and support services for H.I.V. and AIDS patients.

Some critics accused public officials, including President Ronald Reagan, of ignoring the epidemic. Reagan, who took office in 1981, gave his first major speech about AIDS six years later, when he called for wider testing. "Just as most individuals don't know they carry the virus, no one knows to what extent the virus has infected our entire society," Reagan said.

In 1987, a drug known as AZT was introduced. It was the first treatment that seemed to slow the progression of AIDS in those infected with the H.I.V. virus.

The most significant breakthrough in

drug treatments today are available in a single pill. Perhaps most significant, the cost of the drugs has dropped dramatically, from about \$12,000 a year to about \$200 for some programs in poor countries. But no one knows whether these drugs will work indefinitely.

The Future of AIDS

Despite tremendous strides in the past 30 years in containing and treating AIDS, the outlook for the disease remains uncertain. Today an estimated 34 million people, mostly in the poor countries of sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia, are infected with H.I.V. and 2.7 million more become infected each year, according to the United Nations.

In the U.S., the number of new infections per year has dropped from 130,000 at the peak of the epidemic to 50,000, but has stubbornly remained at that level for the past five years. Though nearly 7 million people worldwide are receiving drug treatments paid for with billions of dollars from government and private sources (more than half of which comes from the U.S.), many more are not getting the treatment they need. Health officials say an effective vaccine is badly needed but that it's still years off.

Beyond that, there's concern that stories about Magic Johnson and others infected with

H.I.V. living more normal lives might make people—especially teenagers, who weren't around when the epidemic began—complacent about how serious a disease AIDS remains. Anyone—white, black, male, female, rich, poor, young and old—can still get it.

"Young people have a different perspective because H.I.V. has become a treatable chronic disease," says Dr. Bia of AmeriCares. "But there's a lot of work to be done, and the epidemic continues." •

H.I.V./AIDS TODAY

Region	Number Infected
Sub-Saharan Africa	22.9 million
South/Southeast Asia	4 million
Eastern Europe/Central Asia	1.5 million
Central & South America	1.4 million
North America	1.3 million
Western & Central Europe	840,000
East Asia	790,000
North Africa/Middle East	470,000
Caribbean	200,000
Oceania	54,000
Global Total	34 million

SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS 2011 REPORT (2010 ESTIMATES, NUMBERS ROUNDED).

treatment came in the mid-1990s, with the advent of drug combinations, popularly known as cocktails, which have done more than just help keep H.I.V.-infected people alive. Magic Johnson, the Los Angeles Lakers basketball star who announced in 1991 that he was retiring because he was H.I.V.-positive, has been taking the medications for more than 20 years. He's been leading a robust and successful life as a businessman: Last month, he bought the Los Angeles Dodgers with a group of investors.

Unlike the early days of the epidemic, when patients had to take up to 20 tablets a day at very specific hours, some

Dr. Lawrence K. Altman writes about health issues for The New York Times. Additional reporting by Veronica Majerol.

WALLY MCNAMEE/CORBIS (AIDS PATIENT); BETTMANN/CORBIS (PROTEST); BETTMANN/CORBIS (RYAN WHITE); DAVID EVANS/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY/CORBIS (AFRICAN RAY TAMARRA/GETTY IMAGES); MINNA J. MARTINI; ROBERTO BOREA/AP IMAGES (DRUGS); FREDERICK M. BROWN/AP IMAGES (MAGIC JOHNSON)

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