

Statement adopted at the 74th Hadassah National Convention

AMERICAN AFFAIRS

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AIDS

Since 1979, more than 60,000 Americans have been diagnosed with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS); more than 30,000 have died of the disease, and thousands more are suffering with AIDS symptoms. Public health officials estimate that at least 1.5 million and as many as 2.5 million individuals are infected with the AIDS virus, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control estimates that some 50 to 70 percent of those infected will develop AIDS within ten years.

When the AIDS virus develops into full-blown AIDS, it is thought to be universally fatal; no vaccine or cure has been found to date. AIDS can affect anyone and everyone. Unlike other illnesses of critical concern, AIDS carries with it a stigma for which its victims pay a terrible price, going beyond the illness itself.

Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, moved by the Jewish moral imperative to care for the sick and the dying, believes that where fear spawns prejudice, we must help bring the light of knowledge to bear upon ignorance. We, therefore, resolve to:

- educate ourselves and help educate others about the facts of AIDS, paying special attention to the understanding of how AIDS is transmitted, paying special attention to the understanding of how AIDS is, and is not, transmitted.
- advocate a rational discourse with respect to public policy concerning issues such as mandatory AIDS screening, health and life insurance for persons with AIDS and the cost of treating persons with AIDS.
- familiarize ourselves with resources within and without the Jewish community to assist persons with AIDS, their families and loved ones.
- urge our elected officials to do their part in securing increased services for persons with AIDS.
- work for increased funding for research in a manner consistent with the urgency of this human crisis.