

Repeating Mistakes: Press Coverage of HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific.

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Statement of Sources

The work presented in this thesis, is to the best of my knowledge and belief, original and my own work, except as acknowledged in the text. The material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other University.

Abstract

The Problem

HIV/AIDS came late to Papua New Guinea (PNG). Yet, despite the opportunity to learn from press coverage in other parts of the world, the press in PNG during the 1990s repeated the same trends and mistakes that occurred with coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Western press during the 1980s; initially a slow response in which certain groups were targeted as the main offenders and sufferers. This was followed by increased coverage after the recognition of possible HIV infection in the wider population. Finally, there was a gradual decrease in the number of news items on HIV/AIDS. This pattern also reflected what Downs (1972) described as the 'issue-attention cycle' - the rise, peak and decline of media interest in a well-established health issue.

Scope

The research material was based on a quantitative analysis of all HIV/AIDS articles in the three main English newspapers in PNG from June 1987 - when the first HIV/AIDS story was reported - until December 1997 when the National AIDS Council (NAC) was set up by an act of Parliament. To chart more recent developments, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG was undertaken during a two-year period from January 1998 until December 1999. In total, a 12-year period of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG was researched. Also, interviews with 25 newspaper and magazine editors in the Pacific region were conducted by the author to discover the motivation for the inclusion or omission of HIV/AIDS news items. Seven countries in the Pacific were selected so as to reflect the three main racial groups and to assess if they adopted different approaches to reporting HIV/AIDS. These countries included PNG and Fiji (Melanesia); Tonga and Samoa (Polynesia); New Caledonia and Tahiti (French Melanesia and Polynesia) and the Federated States of Micronesia.

Conclusions

Results show that press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG during the 1990s followed closely the threefold chronological pattern adopted by the Western press in the 1980s with variations in timing and emphasis. Similar mistakes were repeated, most notably an initial over-emphasis on risk groups instead of risk behaviours and a lack of information about ways to prevent infection. Interviews with editors in PNG and the South Pacific revealed a noticeable lack of knowledge and understanding of the disease. Up until mid-1999, more than 70 per cent of the editors interviewed by the author believed malaria was a more serious health threat than HIV/AIDS.

Acknowledgements

In 1988, I met a young Malawian woman who was living with AIDS. For three years I watched her die slowly from a variety of infections and illnesses. During one of my last visits to her home, she asked if I could warn others about AIDS and save them from facing a shortened and sick-ridden life. I made a promise that I would do my best and since then I have tried to promote HIV/AIDS awareness wherever I have lived and worked. That Malawian woman changed my whole outlook on HIV/AIDS and I dedicate this research to her memory.

This research, which is in response to the alarming increase of HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea (PNG), would have been impossible without the help and support of certain individuals. My gratitude goes first to my main supervisor, Dr Rod Kirkpatrick, for his interest in the project and for the way he returned corrections so quickly. My second supervisor, Suzanna Layton, has a vast knowledge and experience of the South Pacific and she provided both insights and information about the region. Professor John Henningham, head of the Journalism Department at Queensland University, was a constant source of encouragement.

Special thanks must go to the University of Queensland for providing a two-year scholarship to start this project and a special travel grant to complete it. Also, I would like to thank the United Nations for the invitation to assist with workshops for editors and journalists on reporting HIV/AIDS in Tonga, Samoa and Fiji; the National AIDS Council (NAC) in PNG for allowing the author to coordinate the first workshop on HIV/AIDS for media personnel in that country; the South Pacific Community (SPC) for the invitation to present a research paper on media coverage of HIV/AIDS at the first South Pacific regional meeting on HIV/AIDS; the organisers of the Fifth International Conference on HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICCAP) for the invitation to address more than 3,000 delegates from 67 countries on media coverage of HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific.

I would also like to thank Dawn Wilson, Susan Bradley, Shelley Woods and Mark Townsend for their valuable advice on study implementation. Finally, I thank the newspaper and magazine editors and journalists who I met during my travels around the South Pacific region. For the most part, they showed a willingness to improve their knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS.

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Abbreviations

HIV	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
WHO	World Health Organisation
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme for HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PNG	Papua New Guinea
NAC	National AIDS Council
PWA	People Living With AIDS
ARC	AIDS Related Complex
MI	Mobilising Information

Papers Presented by the Author at International Conferences in 1999

HIV/AIDS in the Pacific: Working With the Media, at the First Regional Conference on HIV/AIDS in the Pacific, 22 - 24 February, Nadi, Fiji.

Press Coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG and the South Pacific: Delaying the Inevitable, at the First Oceania Regional Conference of Press Councils, 22 - 24 June, Brisbane, Australia.

Medical Reporting in the Pacific, at the annual meeting of the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA), 8 - 11 October, Suva, Fiji.

Press Coverage of HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific, at the Fifth International Conference of HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, 23 -27 October, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

United Nations-sponsored workshops for journalists on HIV/AIDS awareness in the South Pacific. _

Samoa 29 June - 2 July, 1998.

Tonga 6 July - 9 July, 1998.

At each workshop the author delivered three separate papers:

1. Press coverage of HIV/AIDS throughout the World.
2. Press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific.
3. Suggestions for reporting diseases in the South Pacific.

Guest lecturer at University of Queensland, (1998 - 1999).
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JR 815 International Journalism.	(1 lecture)
JR 823 Ethics and Journalism.	(1 lecture)
ID 313 Media Research Methods.	(2 lectures)
JR 215 Comparative Media Systems.	(1 lecture)
JR 223 Journalism Ethics.	(1 lecture)

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A paper presented by the author at the Postgraduate Colloquium and Workshop, 5 November, University of Queensland._

Paper presented by the author in 2000

'Press Coverage of HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea'. A series of three research papers presented at a three-day workshop organised by the National AIDS Council (NAC) for editors and journalists from the major media outlets in PNG, together with journalism students from the University of Papua New Guinea and Divine Word University. Port Moresby, PNG, 31 May – 2 June.

Textbooks

Cullen, T. (2000) **Reporting HIV/AIDS: A Handbook for Journalists in the South Pacific**. Port Moresby: National AIDS Council. (Still in progress).

Cullen, T. (2000) **Reporting Health and Coverage of HIV/AIDS**. A chapter for the new textbook, The Pacific Journalist. Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific Press. (Still in progress).

Articles written by the author on HIV/AIDS since the beginning of the PhD research

Getting the HIV/AIDS story told right.	<u>Islands Business</u> , October, 1998: 50 - 51.
Where the media is failing on AIDS.	<u>Gemini International</u> , 18 September, 1998: 170 – 172.
Press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific: Why is it still a routine health story?	<u>Pacific Islands Report</u> , 12 October, 1998: 8 -12.
Media must step up AIDS focus.	<u>The National</u> , 2 October, 1998: 11.
Need for better AIDS coverage.	<u>Pacific Journalism Review</u> , November, 1997: 71 - 73 ISSN 1023 9499.
Press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific: A lost opportunity.	<u>Pacific Journalism Review</u> , November, 1998: 22 - 25. ISSN 1023 9499.
Reporting diseases in the Pacific	<u>Pacific Journalism Review</u> , November, 1999: 66-70. ISSN 1023 9499.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The relentless surge in Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infections, first noted in the early 1980s, continues. A report by the joint United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), estimated that at the end of 1999 over 50 million individuals worldwide had been infected with HIV, of whom more than 33 million were still alive and over 16 million had died (UNAIDS, 1999b). The report, AIDS Epidemic Update - December 1999, estimates that 32.4 million adults and 1.2 million children were living with HIV at the end of 1999. AIDS deaths reached a record 2.6 million in 1999 while in the same year HIV infections continued unabated with an estimated 5.6 million adults and children infected (Table 1.1). More than 95 per cent of all those infected live in the developing world and there are roughly 1,600 new infections every day. In 1999, an estimated 570,000 children aged 14 or younger became infected with HIV (UNAIDS, 1999b).

Despite this unfolding human tragedy, the Western press (North America and Western Europe) report the disease only on rare occasions such as World AIDS Day (1 December) or when there is a possible scientific breakthrough in vaccine research. Admittedly, the worst of the epidemic, especially in Western Europe, seems to have peaked. As a result of scant press coverage, many people today in the developed world perceive that HIV/AIDS is no longer a threat and believe it has faded away and virtually disappeared. This is not correct and the chronology of Western press reports on HIV/AIDS reveal the press itself played a significant part in creating this false perception.

Table 1.1

HIV/AIDS: Global estimates for 1999

People living with HIV/AIDS.....	33.6 million
New HIV infections in 1999.....	5.6million
Deaths due to HIV/AIDS in 1999.....	2.6 million
Cumulative number of deaths due to HIV/AIDS.....	16.3 million

In the early 1980s when HIV was first diagnosed as the virus that eventually leads to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), the Western press initially targeted high risk groups such as homosexuals and drug users as the main offenders and sufferers. It seems these two groups, because of their 'alternative' lifestyles, had imposed death sentences on themselves and so warranted only limited coverage. Then by 1986, with the acknowledgment of possible HIV infection through unprotected heterosexual intercourse, press coverage of HIV/AIDS reached saturation point sometimes bordering on 'moral panic' (Watney, 1987). Yet, within the following two years the disease had been 'routinised' in the press and treated as just a regular health story. It is safe to conclude that by the early 1990s - a 'toning down' of sensational and stereotyping press reports about HIV/AIDS had occurred and complacency about the disease in the Western press had set in.

The chronology of Western press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s reveals that mistakes were made. During the first phase (1982-1985), press reports initially concentrated on high-risk groups rather than risk behaviours. This led to the stereotyping and stigmatising of people living with HIV/AIDS. Only homosexuals and drug users were considered

as exposed to the disease. This early description of the problem left a lasting perception in the public attitudes towards the disease (Aaron, 1992; Watney, 1987). This phase of 'narrow-casting' was followed by sensational and fear-based reporting (1986-87) when it was discovered that the virus could threaten the wider heterosexual community. Finally, since 1990, a decade of complacency has seen HIV/AIDS virtually discarded as an issue and treated as just another common disease. These points are fully discussed in chapter 2 - especially how the chronology and shape of press attention followed closely what Downs (1972) describes as the 'issue-attention cycle', the risk, peak and decline of interest in health issues.

There is a link between Western press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and what occurred in Papua New Guinea (PNG) throughout the 1990s. Basically, the press in PNG followed a similar chronology and repeated the same trends and mistakes as their Western counterparts: initially a slow response to the problem in which only high risk groups were targeted followed by a short period of saturation coverage when risk to the wider population was recognised. Finally, the disease was relegated to just another routine health story. According to Senge (1999b), one of the most respected newspaper editors in the South Pacific, a common perception among people in PNG - 12 years after the first news report on HIV/AIDS in 1987 - is that " this is not my problem. It's just prostitutes and their clients that get AIDS." (Senge Kolma, 1999b). As the author argues in Chapters 7 and 8, the press in PNG have unwittingly played a significant part in creating this false perception. Unfortunately, this could not have happened at a worse time as the HIV/AIDS epidemic begins to take hold throughout the country.

In 1996, while launching the United Nations report: **Time to Act: The Pacific Response to AIDS**, the former Fijian Prime Minister, Sitiveni Rabuka,

warned of the potential disaster of the emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic in the South Pacific region:

The HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Pacific is a clear enough signal that there is a storm gathering force; a storm that can become a devastating hurricane such as we have never before experienced and a storm which, if we do not take the necessary precautions we will not live through or live to regret forever (Rabuka, 1996).

This statement is now a reality in PNG: the HIV/AIDS storm has come ashore and there is an urgent need to shelter from its ferocity and destruction. The current figures for HIV infections in PNG are low. By March 2000, 2,100 HIV/AIDS cases had been reported to the Department of Health and another 661 people had died from AIDS related illnesses (Senge, 2000). AIDS has now become the leading cause of death at the largest hospital in the country, Port Moresby's General Hospital. This may be just the tip of the iceberg.

Clement Malau, director of the PNG National AIDS Council Secretariat (NAC), (which began operating in April 1999), is the official co-ordinator of HIV/AIDS activities and policies in PNG. Malau (1999) insists the massive epidemic of HIV/AIDS in many Sub-Saharan African countries such as Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe - where HIV infection rates are as high as 25 per cent in each country - could be repeated in PNG.

Given the current situation in PNG, we could go the same way as many Sub-Saharan African countries; we've got a large sex industry and uncontrolled sexually transmitted infections; we've got a very young sexually active population and we've got to a certain extent denial in some provinces. So given that sort of setting, I think that it's not too much of an exaggerated statement to say that PNG could end up with extremely high infections rates as has happened in these Africa countries (Malau, 1999b).

Describing the spread of HIV/AIDS in PNG, Peter Piot (1999), executive head of the United Nations AIDS programme (UNAIDS), predicts a potentially devastating outcome if decisive action is not taken to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Although, it is difficult to predict precisely the future, the potential is definitely there and it will depend on how the country is going to respond to it that will determine the course of the epidemic (Piot, 1999b).

Preparations , however, to stave off the HIV/AIDS onslaught have lacked a sense of urgency and commitment. Instead, since the first known HIV case was diagnosed in PNG in 1987, denial of the disease and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS have been common reactions to the problem. These two negative responses seriously hamper effective prevention strategies and are often based on ignorance of the situation and the perception that HIV/AIDS is the problem of someone else.

This is where the media in PNG and the press in particular, can still play a vital role in destroying the myths and misinformed perceptions that surround the disease by imparting reliable information to improve understanding. Researchers such as Singer and Endreny (1987), Wallack (1990) and Childers (1992) argue that the press is an important source of health information for individuals and that the press may also influence health policy development by helping (or not helping) to put health issues on the public agenda. News coverage of a health problem like HIV/AIDS may tend to legitimise that problem, leading news consumers to give greater support to efforts to solve those problems than those that receive less coverage. Baker (1986) states that analysis of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the United States suggests the press may have encouraged policy makers to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis by helping to

educate them about the potential threat to mainstream constituents (Baker, 1986: 188).

Admittedly, there are high illiteracy rates in PNG which would seem to lessen the importance and influence of the press to reach large sections of the population. (Appendix 19). Yet, newspapers in PNG are frequently used by radio and television news editors to provide a basis for their daily news stories (Eggins, 1997). Moreover, they are read by the decision-makers in government and business who ultimately influence national policy and funding. Also, the press keeps issues and debates in the public forum and potentially can move items onto and up the political agenda. This is vital for providing the impetus for a national response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. In contrast, television tends to be more of an urban phenomenon while radio, which has the potential to be the most effective medium for spreading information to the wide-flung communities dotted throughout PNG, has been under-funded, under-staffed and plagued by frequent maintenance problems.

Despite the potential influence of the press to alter public perception of the disease, the author argues throughout this research that the press in PNG in the 1990s followed the trends and mistakes that occurred with press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Western press during the 1980s. A closer examination of the content of news stories on HIV/AIDS in Chapter 7 shows that a large number of them concentrated mainly on the latest statistics for HIV/AIDS or statements from the National AIDS Council (NAC). There was little in the way of 'mobilising information' (MI) which involves informing people about how to respond to a preventable disease such as HIV. The concept of MI will be discussed in the Literature Review.

Significance

This is the first research of its kind to examine press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG. The author chose to concentrate mainly on PNG because it has the greatest number of HIV/AIDS cases in the South Pacific, more than the combined figures of all the other South Pacific countries (Appendix 20). Secondly, it has the largest news media in the Pacific (Robie, 1999: 4). Thirdly, it is the largest of the South Pacific Islands in terms of physical size and population. It covers nearly 80 per cent of the land area of the South Pacific and is home to 4.6 million people out of total Pacific population of 6.8 million (Andrews, 1997: 9).

AIMS

The overall aim of the research is not to point the finger of blame but to help newspaper editors in PNG and throughout the South Pacific avoid repeating the same mistakes in press coverage of HIV/AIDS as occurred in the Western press, especially the aspects of stereotyping, sensationalism and complacency. The urgency of this task is underlined by the statement of the current PNG Prime Minister, Sir Mekere Morauta. Speaking in Port Moresby at the launch of World AIDS Day on 1 December 1999, Sir Mekere described the HIV/AIDS situation in the country as a "silent catastrophe." The Prime Minister warned that there were between 10,000 and 20,000 HIV positive individuals in a population of four and half million people and that the rate of HIV infection could be grossly underestimated because there were an estimated 10 cases of HIV positive individuals for every diagnosed case (Morauta, 1999).

To obtain a wider picture, the author interviewed 25 newspaper and magazine editors in seven Pacific countries (PNG, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Micronesia, French Polynesia, French Melanesia). Editors were chosen because as previous researchers have shown, they wield considerable influence in the selection of new stories (Breed, 1954; Gieber, 1956; White

1964; Sigelman 1973; Janowitz 1975; Baker, 1980; Layton, 1998b). The seven countries reflect the three prominent ethnic groups in the South Pacific, namely the Melanesians , Polynesians and Micronesians. The author set out to detect if there were any differences in the presentation of HIV/AIDS new stories within the various ethnic groups and whether this was dependent on cultural, political or social factors.

The main motivation for this PhD research stems from the author's two-year appointment as head of the Journalism Department at Divine Word University in PNG from 1996 -1997. Initial private research into levels of HIV/AIDS awareness among the media in the country, first among the students and staff in the journalism department and later among editors and journalists in the capital, Port Moresby, pointed to a high degree of denial and ignorance about the disease. Despite the fact that in the mid-1990s, the former PNG Health Minister, Peter Barter, made repeated statements about the increasing spread of HIV/AIDS throughout the country, denial and complacency remained firmly in place.

For the author, it was like watching in slow motion a repeat performance of the prolonged period of denial towards HIV/AIDS in Malawi, southern Africa, where the author worked from 1981-1999. In 1981 there were no recorded cases of HIV. By 1991, when the author departed the country, at least 10 per cent of the population (aged 15 - 49) were infected with the HIV virus. At end of 1999, nearly 25 per cent of Malawians were living with HIV (UNAIDS, 1999a). The fear is that the HIV/AIDS epidemic in PNG, although at an early stage, could reach Malawian proportions within the next 10 years. Peter Piot (1999), executive head of the United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS, told the author in an interview that:

When we look at country like PNG with such an incredibly high incidence of classic sexually transmitted diseases and sexual behaviour patterns, everything is there for an AIDS

epidemic on African proportions. Although it is difficult to predict precisely the future, the potential is definitely there. (Piot, 1999b).

Piot (1999) emphasises that the country's response to HIV/AIDS is crucial. This involves the active participation of all sectors of PNG society especially politicians, local and international non-government organisations (NGOs), medical personnel, church leaders and the media. The author believes the media and the press in particular has a key role to play in providing reliable facts about the epidemic and explaining ways to avoid or even cope with HIV infection.

PNG is certain to experience a massive AIDS epidemic within the next decade if it does not respond quickly and effectively to the current crisis. In this context, the press have the potential to inform not only public opinion but especially politicians and future public policy. They can tell people about HIV/AIDS and ways to protect themselves. Basically, they are in a position to improve the understanding of HIV, to counteract stigma and discrimination. Their contribution is vital especially if the media helps eliminate stigma because this is the key to break the silence and to move the response forward (Piot, 1999b).

Outline of Chapters

The following chapters examine what role the Western press and the PNG press in particular have played in their coverage of HIV/AIDS. Chapter 2 analyses several media theories in connection with HIV/AIDS especially the limitations placed upon press coverage of HIV/AIDS by traditional news gathering and values and the use of language to select, construct and interpret the disease. Chapter 3 details the method

used in this study while Chapter 4 situates PNG on the global HIV/AIDS map. Chapter 5 examines how the North American, European, African, Australian, and South East Asian press covered the HIV/AIDS story while Chapter 6 looks in particular at what happened in the South Pacific.

Chapter 7 provides an in-depth analysis of HIV/AIDS press reports in PNG from 1987 - when the first HIV case was discovered in the country - until December 1997 with the launch of the National AIDS Council (NAC). Apart from this ten-year period of analysis the author provides more recent data by examining the categories and contents of HIV/AIDS news items from January 1998 until December 1999. In total a 12-year period of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG was researched. Chapter 8 involves an analysis of interviews with 25 newspaper and magazine editors in several South Pacific countries in an attempt to discover the motivation for their coverage or omission of HIV/AIDS news items. Conclusions follow in chapter 9. Throughout this research, the abbreviated terms HIV and AIDS are combined (HIV/AIDS) so as to include people living with the virus and those who have already developed AIDS.

Chapter Two **Literature Review**

Twenty years ago, no one had ever heard of HIV/AIDS. But from 1981-1995, an extensive library of material on the disease appeared throughout the Western world. Then, with the 'routinization' of the disease in the early 1990s, public interest and the flood of academic literature subsided. In direct contrast, little information, research and analysis has surfaced in the South Pacific despite a significant and worrying increase of HIV/AIDS since the first case was discovered in 1986.

The literature review, therefore, concentrates on the main issues raised by media coverage of HIV/AIDS around the world, while at the same time highlighting aspects that directly concern the South Pacific. Where it is possible, the focus is on the press. The chapter begins with a review of recent studies on the press and journalists in the South Pacific followed by an analysis of the role of the media and its effects in regard to press coverage of HIV/AIDS.

1. Surveys of the press in the South Pacific

Richstad, McMillan and Barney (1973) were the first to undertake a comprehensive review of regional newspapers in the South Pacific. To achieve this, the researchers sent questionnaires to Pacific editors and publishers in an attempt to record the growth of the press in the region. Their research reported on 63 publications. However, they omitted certain categories such as scholarly and literary journals, the religious press and annual reports (Layton, 1992: 5). In 1989, Layton (1992) updated this survey which had preceded the independence of many

South Pacific Islands and highlighted an impressive growth in various sectors of the Pacific press: the number of newspapers had nearly doubled and the circulation of weeklies had nearly trebled (Layton, 1992: 12). Richstad stated that most of the newspapers he surveyed were small with an average of 18 pages. By 1989, the number of pages had increased 40 per cent overall (Layton, 1992: 13).

Layton (1992) questioned whether the increase in pages meant a corresponding increase in news content, or simply more advertising. The researcher pinpointed the installation of new technology as a major reason for the surge in newspaper and circulation figures which she argues:

Brought down the cost of producing newspapers and dramatically improved the quality of their appearance. Three-quarters of the periodicals in the 1989 study were computer typeset. Fifty per cent of those, or one third of the total, were desktop published either in-house or commercially (Layton, 1992: 14).

Layton's 1989 survey showed a dramatic increase in the number of local editors, up to 56 per cent. In 1973, nearly two thirds of senior editors were still non-indigenous. The shift meant that local editors had greater influence over the selection of news stories and the agenda-setting process.

Pacific Islanders have, for the most part, been denied the power to make editorial (and hence agenda-setting) decisions about information flow in the community...By 1989 this had finally changed...De-colonisation in the late 1970s and early 1980s brought with it a new emphasis on the localisation of Pacific Island workforces including the media (Layton, 1992: 15).

Because of the newly enhanced position of editors in the South Pacific region in terms of position and power, this thesis includes interviews with 25 editors from seven South Pacific countries. These interviews were

conducted in order to discover the editors' views about HIV/AIDS and why so many hesitated in responding to the serious public health threat that HIV/AIDS posed.

The number of journalists employed full time in the region had increased fourfold from (59) in 1973 to (241) in 1989. It seems that much of this was due to the increase in media (Layton, 1992: 16). Management structures also witnessed an expansion.

In 1973, 56 per cent of papers was produced by one person and chief reporter organisations and 44 per cent by editor and editorial board types. By 1989, 47 per cent was produced by one person and chief reporter and 53 per cent by the editor and editorial board (Layton, 1992: 17).

Layton (1992) noted a significant increase in foreign-owned private newspapers and lists 55 privately owned newspapers of which 75 per cent "appear at least principally owned by non-Pacific Islanders. Their dominance however, is even more pronounced in terms of circulation. Ninety three per cent of all circulation is produced by these non-indigenous publishers" (Layton, 1992: 18). Private newspapers owned by non-Pacific Islanders were concentrated in Fiji (17 titles), Guam (10 titles) and French Polynesia (4 titles). In 1986 and 1987, Rupert Murdoch and Robert Hersant joined Gannett in Pacific Islands operations and by the end of the 1980s, these three were responsible for 27 per cent of privately owned circulation, or 18 per cent of the total press in the Pacific (Layton, 1992: 22).

Concern over the influence of these media multinationals in the region prompted journalists attending a conference organised by the International Federation of Journalists(IFJ) in Port Moresby (1989) to express anxiety over "the potential for political and commercial interests to diminish the diversity and independence of the media." (cited in

Layton, 1992: 22). Layton (1992) warned against the possible negative impact of such an imbalance in newspaper ownership.

Murdoch and Hersant have international reputations for influencing editorial policy and while conventional wisdom has it that their Pacific holdings are too insignificant to warrant such personal attention, the Hersant papers in Tahiti have already been accused of playing a "partisan role" during the recent constitutional crisis (Layton, 1992: 23).

2. Surveys of South Pacific Journalists

The decade from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s saw a marked increase in surveys of journalists around the world. Weaver (1998) outlines two reasons for this. Firstly, journalists began to play a more important role where there had been a transition from an authoritarian to a more democratic political system. Secondly, there was an assumption that journalists' backgrounds and ideas have some relationship to what is reported in the various news media around the world, and that this news coverage matters in terms of world public opinion and policies (Weaver: 1998: 2). Many of these studies were modelled on two major surveys of United States journalists conducted by Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman, (1976) and Weaver and Wilhoit, (1986).

The first research to focus primarily on journalists in the South Pacific was conducted by Phinney (1985). The researcher questioned 42 Papua New Guinean press and radio journalists on topics ranging from demographics to possible government and editorial pressure and whether they would stand as political candidates in future elections. Fifty two per cent of newspaper journalists replied to his questionnaire. From their responses, Phinney observed the potential influence these journalists could exert over politicians, civil servants and other well-educated Papua New Guineans. Despite the low percentage of readers

in Papua New Guinea (PNG), the press, he argues, gains its immense importance because of its ability to reach the decision makers (Phinney, 1985: 46). Phinney states, moreover, that PNG journalists were well able to defend themselves against possible government moves to impose censorship on certain issues and was not surprised by the independent attitude of the PNG journalists, many of which resembled those of their Australian counterparts.

After all, Australian journalists set up the first newsrooms in Papua New Guinea and trained many of the Papua New Guineans now in senior management positions in both print and broadcast media (Phinney, 1985: 125).

While Phinney's research was restricted to PNG, Masterton (1989) used a questionnaire to discover how journalists were regarded in the South Pacific. He distributed it to selected journalists and certain members of the public who were considered 'intelligent and interested' in order to discover how the media was regarded in the South Pacific. He admits to the limitations of his research which did not aim to be "comprehensive or statistically satisfactory. Both are difficult in this region. Its justification is that it is the only such survey conducted in the South Pacific" (Masterton, 1989 : 46).

The study on Pacific Islands journalists, undertaken by Layton (1994), employed the questionnaire format to challenge Meller (1976) who predicted that Pacific Islands journalists would become more cautious in their reporting as a result of social and cultural pressures after independence. Layton's research aimed to explore attitudes on media roles, responsibilities and ethical standards. A total of 164 questionnaires were returned (60 per cent) and the researcher conducted 108 in-depth interviews. Contrary to Meller's prediction, Layton shows that Pacific Islands journalists have maintained a critical perspective of government actions and are strongly committed to Western models of professional

practice (Layton, 1994:1). Culture was acknowledged as a complication in their work. But instead of bowing to it, journalists used cultural mechanisms to further develop liberal media traditions (Layton, 1994: ii).

Layton (1994) divided Pacific journalists into three distinct ethnic groups: Melanesians, Polynesians and Micronesians. Melanesian journalists were found to be young, indigenous well-educated and reasonably experienced in their jobs. Polynesians were younger but less educated while Micronesian journalists were the oldest, most experienced and best educated (Layton, 1994: 157). In terms of media responsibilities, Layton's research showed that over 90 per cent of Pacific Islands journalists believed other sources should be found if their governments denied them access to information and that the media should be editorially independent (Layton, 1994: 197). Government-employed journalists, however, cautioned against using reports that could threaten national unity and image. Overall, evidence from her research shows indigenous journalists in the Pacific maintaining a strong professional value system and a strong sense of social responsibility (Layton, 1994: 231). Layton's survey strongly suggests that Pacific editors and journalists would be both willing and capable to report the HIV/AIDS epidemic in their respective countries.

Robie (1999) began a preliminary research into newsroom training for journalists in Fiji and PNG. The survey was prompted by apparent differences in attitude between the media industries in PNG and Fiji towards journalism education, training and in particular the usefulness of work attachments. The initial survey was conducted between December 1998 and February 1999. It involved the use of a questionnaire which was handed to journalists at 12 news organisations. According to Robie (1999), 124 journalists completed the questionnaire; 59 respondents from Fiji and 65 from PNG. Preliminary findings confirmed some of Layton's (1992) earlier research results, namely that PNG journalists were both young and well educated.

However, there was a decline since Layton's (1992) study from 16 to 13 per cent in the number of tertiary educated Fijian journalists (Robie, 1999: 65). Significantly, more journalists in Fiji (62 per cent) than in PNG (46 per cent) favoured the western 'watchdog' model as the preferred role of the media. However, more than double the number of journalists in PNG (39 per cent) than in Fiji (15 per cent) saw the role of the news media as the 'defender of the truth' (Robie, 1999; 65).

3. The role of the news media and HIV/AIDS

In an attempt to define the role and function of the media, the researchers, Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956), identify four different theories of the press; the authoritarian, the libertarian, the social responsibility and the soviet communist theory. Layton (1994) argues that the liberal model is the theory most commonly adhered to in the Pacific region, even though it has undergone a number of refinements (Layton, 1994: 8).

The libertarian theory emerged in Britain and America in the seventeenth century and was based on the philosophies of Milton, Locke and Mill. The libertarian press referred to 'a market place of free ideas' operating without controls and where market forces were of prime importance. Under the libertarian concept, the media had a threefold function: to inform; to entertain and to provide a basis of economic support to ensure financial independence (Siebert et al. , 1956: 51). This was slightly modified by Mayer (1964) who said there were three perspectives on the functions of the press: as a business, a public utility and a mixture of both (Mayer, 1964: 46). The libertarian theory encourages the notion that no matter how the media performs, its performance per se is in the public interest. If it made mistakes, then the truth would prevail in a self-righting process.

Another theory seen as reflecting the function and role of the press is that of 'social responsibility' which emphasises the idea of the media's duty to help meet the needs of society. This has important implications for press coverage of HIV/AIDS since in many countries it is either an existing or emerging major public health threat. There is a 'responsibility' on the part of the press to inform the public about this impending epidemic.

The theory developed out of the 1947 Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press which was set up in the United States to decide whether press freedom was in danger especially from state intervention. The Commission's report entitled, *A Free and Responsible Press*, set five standards of performance for the press: to provide a truthful, comprehensive account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning. Also, the press should serve as a forum for exchange of comment and criticism and offer a representative picture of all groups in society. Finally, the press should present and clarify the goals of society and provide full access to the day's intelligence (Siebert et al., 1956: 15). Moreover, the Commission reported that the media had a duty to meet socially required standards of performance.

Freedom carries obligations and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under our government, is obliged to be responsible to society (Siebert et al. , 1956: 74).

The Hutchins report seemed to signal a significant theoretical shift of emphasis with the introduction of the new social responsibility theory. Yet, while the report insisted on the idea of a free and also a responsible press, it failed to give practical guidelines to journalists in making daily ethical decisions. The theory did gain widespread recognition in the US press until the 1960s. There was, however, a stronger bias towards the libertarian model and the desire to safeguard such ideals as the freedom

of the press by promoting the right to be informed, the free flow of information, freedom of access and a diversity of media (McQuail, 1994: 130).

While the libertarian and social responsibility theories are still relevant to the general debate about the role of the media in society and in particular to media coverage of HIV/AIDS, an attempt to formulate consistent and workable theories of the press is extremely difficult because of the underlying differences of interest and political ideology which are present in any society. Moreover, the frameworks for the analysis of the role of the media offered by Siebert et al., have generally derived from a simple and outdated notion of the press as providing only news and information. These theories are unable to respond adequately to emerging needs created by the variety of mass media types and services and with constantly changing technology.

An example of this is evident with growth of other theories such as 'Development Communication' media theory. This acknowledges that societies, undergoing a transition from underdevelopment and colonialism to independence, often lack basic material support and technical skills. Because of these limitations, priorities have to be carefully selected. These emphasize the fundamental role of the media to promote national development, support democracy and offer solidarity with developing countries. Likewise, the 'democratic-participant' media theory or 'grass-roots media' developed as a reaction to the dominance of the main mass media by private or public monopolies. The theory supports the right to relevant local information and has resulted in the underground or alternative press, community cable television, neighbourhood media and media for women and ethnic minorities (McQuail, 1994: 131).

4. Media Effects Research

McQuail (1994) argues that the entire study of mass communication is based on the premise that the media have significant effects. Yet there is little agreement on the nature and extent of these assumed effects and considerable doubt remains.

The paradox can be partly explained in terms of the difference between the general and the particular. We can be sure that particular effects are occurring all the time without being able to see or predicate the aggregate outcome or to know after the event how much is attributable to the media. There can be many effects without any overall pattern or direction. The media are rarely likely to be the only necessary or sufficient cause of effect and relative contribution is extremely hard to assess (McQuail, 1994: 327).

Despite these uncertainties, McQuail (1994) notes there is sufficient data to examine the effects of the media even if much of the research remains inconclusive. This is evident in the history of media effects research which McQuail divides into four periods. The first phase, from the turn of the century until the late 1930s and described as the 'all powerful media', accredited the media with considerable power to shape opinion and belief, to change habits of life and to mould behaviour (McQuail, 1994: 328). The era of research in the 1940s and 1950s marked the beginning of the second phase which saw separate studies being carried out into the effects of different types of media content, of particular films and of entire political campaigns. Attention was mainly focused on the possibility of using film and other media for planned persuasion or information. Klapper (1960) set the seal on this research phase by concluding that mass communication does not act as a necessary or sufficient cause of audience effects but rather functions through the pre-existing structure of social relationships and a particular social and cultural content.

In the third phase, there was a determined desire to rediscover the power of the media and a reluctance to dismiss the possibility that the media might indeed have powerful social effects and be an instrument of exercising social and political power (McQuail, 1994: 330). To achieve this, attention was shifted towards long-term change, intervening variables of content, disposition and motivation and collective phenomena such as the climates of opinion, structures of belief, ideologies and cultural patterns together with institutional forms of media provision. The fourth stage in the chronology of media effects research, as outlined by McQuail (1994), saw a break with the 'all powerful media' concept and the emergence of a new approach to media effects which is termed 'social constructivist' (Gamson and Modigliani, cited in McQuail, 1994: 131). This views the media as having their most significant effect when they construct social formations and history itself by framing images of reality in a predictable and patterned way. Audiences, meanwhile, construct their own personal view of social reality with the help of meanings offered by the media. This allows for the power of the media and for the power of the people to choose with a terrain of continuous negotiation in between (McQuail, 1994; 331).

For a more focused analysis of the effects of the media in regard to HIV/AIDS, this thesis highlights three aspects of effects research that have influenced debate about media coverage of the disease. Firstly, that the media construct social reality. Secondly, the media set the agenda and thirdly, they can influence attitudes and behaviour.

4.1. Media constructing social reality.

The process of the social construction of reality holds a central place in communication research. Two basic approaches can be distinguished. The first focuses on the social construction of reality as an

important aspect of the relationship between culture and society. The second, which this thesis highlights, concentrates on the social construction of reality as one type of media effect. The process is defined as 'social construction' because it is carried out through social interaction (Adoni and Mane, 1984; 323).

French researchers, Herzlich and Pierret (1989), describe how in the early 1980s, the French press constructed HIV/AIDS as a social phenomenon in four distinct stages: naming; comparisons with past epidemics; popularisation of medical knowledge; and discourses about the 'other' and in particular, homosexuals. The first stage, naming this mysterious illness, resulted in such labels as 'homosexual cancer' , 'gay cancer', 'the homosexual syndrome' and 'homosexual pneumonia'. The second stage focused on the viral origins of HIV/AIDS and led to discourses about possible contagion. Despite the emergence of heterosexual infection in 1986, the lasting impression of HIV/AIDS, constructed by the press in these two initial stages, proved to be the most lasting: that HIV/AIDS was primarily a 'gay plague' (Herzlich and Pierret, 1989: 1239).

Obituaries provide another source for illustrating the social construction theory. The language used to explain early deaths among young men from AIDS, omitted the cause in a deliberate attempt to distance the deceased person from the disease and the risk group, thereby perpetuating further stigma and fear. However, as more and more people learnt how to decode this language, the obituaries, ironically, created the opposite effect of signalling HIV/AIDS as the possible real cause (Nardi, 1993: 163).

McQuail (1994) highlights the way the media structures meaning and links it to the media's presentation of news. The information they convey, their visual and verbal messages and the tone of their

presentations can define the significance of events, shape public attitudes and challenge public policies. But it is difficult to measure if “the direction, degree, durability and predicability of the effect are all uncertain and have to be established case by case with only limited possibilities for generalisation” (McQuail, 1994: 351).

Hammond and Freimuth (1989) discuss the influence of journalists whom they see as holding a powerful and active position in the construction of meaning. These researchers view journalists as people who can translate knowledge of news sources into understandable information for readers to comprehend.

Journalists are not only the hub and repository, but are active agents of organised life. As linkers and transformers of knowledge in its most elementary forms, journalists offer perpetual articulations on organised life; its problems and prospects, its excesses and successes, its sense of failure and promise of progress. Thus, journalists and their news products have a central place in the knowledge of society (Hammond and Freimuth, 1989: 157).

But the extent of influence that journalists exert on their readers or audience is limited. Donohue, Tichenor, Olien (1975), in their research on the ‘knowledge gap’, re-examined the impact of the quantity of information available to individuals from different social classes. Their conclusions reiterated what Tichenor et al., (1970 and 1973) had found earlier: that the better educated display greater gains in information compared with the less educated (Donohue et al., 1975 : 4).

Aroni (1992), however, believes the social constructionist theory has been the most influential factor in terms of media coverage of HIV/AIDS. Aroni argues that the media do not just provide information and reflect the social world but they structure it for us. This is achieved, not by increasing our knowledge of it, but by helping to make sense of it (Aroni 1992: 127). To realise this aim, the media use frameworks.

The primary framework that has been used in the print media to understand HIV/AIDS is the medical model. The people who have been asked to provide 'authoritative' input are doctors who are considered the experts. They are high up in the 'hierarchy of credibility' (Aroni, 1992: 129).

4.1.1 The rhetoric used to report HIV/AIDS

Debate about whether the media construct reality by structuring meaning is evident in the use of language. Nardi (1993) suggests that the way people construct and interpret reality is related to language. "Language provides the categories and ordered meanings for experiencing the world around us. Language provides the means for objectifying new experiences" (Nardi, 1993: 164). Researcher Van Dijk (1991) highlights the need to observe both the topic and actual text when analysing the underlying meaning of a news story. A news text can be considered to be "like an iceberg of information of which only the tip is actually expressed in words and sentences" (Van Dijk, 1991, cited in Lupton 1994: 181). It is not only the topic which reflects the ideological systems but the language in which the topic is framed.

Nelkin (1991) suggests that selective use of language can trivialise an event or render it important; marginalise some groups and empower others; define an issue as an urgent problem or reduce it to a routine. Nelkin (1991) adds: "the choice of language as a reflection of values is strategic for language carries implications for formulation of policy" (Nelkin 1991b: 303). An example of this is the use of metaphors which have been extensively used to make sense of HIV/AIDS during its construction as a new disease in the public consciousness (Ross and

Carson 1988; Sontag, 1989; Treichler, 1989). The most prominent images were military.

Sontag (1989), who was one of the first researchers to record the influence that metaphors exert on cancer and HIV/AIDS discourses, highlighted the use of military metaphors in the media such as 'fight', 'struggle', 'battle', 'invasion', 'enemy' and 'war' (Sontag, 1989: 10). HIV/AIDS was framed as a foreign invader that people needed to be protected against. Sontag argues against the negative effects of these metaphors and adds that her book, *AIDS and its Metaphors*, is written "not to confer meaning ... but deprive something of meaning" (Sontag, 1989:10). Sontag (1989) states that the use of metaphors does not sum up the situation: often they are too simple and sensational, increasing stigmatisation of the sufferers and fear in the general public (Sontag, 1989: 6).

The metaphor, Sontag claims, cements the way particularly dreaded diseases are envisaged as an alien 'other' or as 'enemies' in modern war. She describes how the move from demonization of the illness to attribution of fault to the patient is an inevitable one. Subsequently, the idea of 'innocent' versus 'guilty' is introduced into the HIV/AIDS discourses where the innocent are labelled 'victims', strongly suggesting others are guilty (Sontag, 1989: 11). In fact with the use of the term 'victim', implicit and explicit moral judgements became tied to the disease. Despite strong criticism, Strong and Berridge (1990) see some value in using the military metaphors if they are used not in the spirit of militarism but to make the analytic statement that HIV/AIDS points to a time of emergency (Strong and Berridge, 1990: 249).

Lupton (1994), however, emphasises the negative impact of metaphors. In order to make sense of HIV/AIDS in Australia, the press in that country seized upon the concepts of blame and guilt especially

when comparing people with medically acquired HIV and infected gay men. The latter were singled out for negative treatment as seen in the use of metaphors such as 'AIDS as punishment', 'AIDS is a moral reformer', 'AIDS as crime' and 'Sex is danger' (Lupton, 1994: 136). The Australian researcher describes how people living with HIV/AIDS were described with one or a number of the following terms: 'deviants', 'victims', 'innocent', 'promiscuous', 'survivors', 'battlers', 'homosexuals', or 'drug addicts'. Each choice of term attempts to influence the way in which readers construct their knowledge and attitudes about HIV/AIDS.

In Australia, the most striking metaphor used by the media was that of the 'Grim Reaper', an image that was used as an educational advertising campaign where HIV/AIDS became "the replacement for nuclear death as the ultimate threat to human existence" (Aroni, 1992: 135). The term 'Grim Reaper' has been traditionally designated to refer to death in Western cultures. In newspapers and television advertisements in Australia, the reaper's powerless victims were bowled over by this ruthless evil disease. This metaphor introduced a strong sense of powerlessness and inevitability for its victims. In other countries, metaphors were also widely used. For example, according to Ross and Carson's study of HIV/AIDS in the American press during the early 1980s, the disease was explained using four main metaphors: 'AIDS is a plague', 'AIDS is death', 'AIDS is a punishment for sin', and 'AIDS is a crime' (Ross and Carson, 1988: 240).

Early links between HIV/AIDS and the gay community in the United States together with media focus on possible transmission routes, led to the gradual 'sexualization' of HIV/AIDS (Alcorn, 1988: 89). The metaphor 'gay plague' became synonymous with deviant, permissive behaviour and implied moral judgement. Karpf (1988) states that for long periods in the United States media, HIV/AIDS was almost entirely buried beneath metaphorical meaning especially the media's characterisation of the

virus as a 'gay plague', their differentiation of innocent and guilty, their promotion of sexual abstinence. It was, however, the 'plague' metaphor, depicting HIV/AIDS as a contagious disease, that helped, more than any other metaphor, to fuel fear and stigma among the public (Karpf, 1988: 146).

According to Aroni (1992), the negative impact of the 'plague' metaphor had a prolonged polarising effect on the public's understanding of HIV/AIDS in the United States, instilling a false sense of security when confronted with the dangers of the disease.

The construction of the image of an HIV/AIDS patient has evolved over the last nine years (1981-1990). The dominant image of a person living with AIDS is still that of a male homosexual suffering from a sexually transmitted disease as a direct result of his sexual practices. This runs the risk of focusing on risk groups rather than on at risk behaviours and sexual practices (Aroni, 1992: 137).

Ross and Carson (1988), discuss the problem of the 'plague' metaphor which can easily become a model or analogue so that HIV/AIDS is believed not only to be like a plague in some ways but shares almost all the characteristics of plague. Sontag (1989) agrees with this point, stating that unlike the military metaphors, 'plague' suggests an uncontrollable disease that implies passive acceptance rather than active resistance. There is a need, Sontag (1989) argues, for the inclusion of more positive statements since HIV/AIDS victims and HIV/AIDS sufferers suggest a passive or helpless response to the illness whereas people with HIV/AIDS are often healthy active people getting on with life. The phrases 'people with AIDS' (shortened to PWA) or 'people with HIV' are preferred. Some suggest people 'living with AIDS' to emphasize life rather than death. 'HIV infected' and 'HIV carrier' are disliked because they place more emphasis on the virus than the individual.

American media researcher, Nelkin (1991), examines possible reasons for such negative language and imagery and suggests that when people see their way of life at risk, they characteristically become less tolerant of social differences.

In their quest for order and control they construct distinctions between normal and perverse, legal and criminal, innocent and culpable, health and diseases. Labelling AIDS as a disease of certain groups becomes a way to focus blame, to isolate the sources of contamination and contagion and to deny the vulnerability and the responsibility of the wider population (Nelkin, 1991b: 303).

4.2. The agenda-setting role of the news media

The term agenda-setting was first coined by McCombs and Shaw (1972) to describe in more general terms the phenomenon that had long been noticed and studied in the context of election campaigns. Cohen (1963) had earlier pointed to the influence of the press to focus public attention in a particular direction. "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (Cohen, 1963: 13). This same point was re-emphasised by Lang and Lang (1986).

The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build the public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects, suggesting what individuals should think about, know about, have feelings about (Lang and Lang, 1986: 466).

The essence of the agenda-setting theory consists of data showing a correspondence between the order of importance given in the media to issues and the order of significance attached to the same issues by the public and politicians. But such evidence is often insufficient to show a causal connection between the various agendas. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) are critical of past agenda-setting research for neglecting the

possible effects on what the people think concerning who is important, where important things happen and why things are important.

According to Rogers and Dearing (1987), there is a need to distinguish clearly between three different agendas: the priorities of the media, those of the public and those of policy. They interact in complex ways and in different directions and while it is likely that the media does contribute to a convergence of the three agendas it is not the same as setting any particular one of them. Researchers Rogers, Dearing and Chang (1991) describe agenda-setting as a plausible but unproven idea. One negative consequence of this inconclusiveness has resulted, according to Katz (1978), in social science research liberating the media from responsibility for the evils of society. Their assumed powerlessness means less responsibility, more freedom of movement and less control.

The potential agenda-setting role of the media is discussed by Bonney and Wilson (1983) who note that it is strongly conditioned by the concept of 'news value' and its associated practices -- the professional ideology of news reporters and editors. News values act as a crucial element in the selection and organisation of news items and as a consequence, they are significant in setting the agenda for editorial comments, features and documentaries and in shaping media audiences' conceptions (Bonney and Wilson, 1983: 287). Henningham (1990) lists several 'traditional' newsworthy criteria which affect whether a news story is selected or shelved. These include: novelty, impact, proximity, conflict, well known people, importance, significance and general interest to a large number of people. (Henningham, 1990: 1) Windschuttle and Windschuttle (1981) point to other news values: disasters, celebrities, politics, human conflict and deviant behaviour. (Windschuttle and Windschuttle 1981: 94)

Apart from the importance of news values, media researchers Galtung and Ruge (cited in Bonney and Wilson 1983: 301), outline three principles which actually determine the marketability of a story in the mainstream press. First, an event is more likely to become news if it concerns elite nations. Certain aspects of HIV/AIDS reporting match this requirement since the disease is world-wide, affecting elite nations such as the United States and Britain. Second, elite people are newsworthy especially if their illness can be described in personal terms and contain negative consequences. Elite celebrities such as the film star Rock Hudson and the singer Freddie Mercury fit this category. Their illness and eventual deaths sparked intense media coverage of HIV/AIDS in the mid 1980s to early 1990s. Third, stories that show people coping with disease or helping others cope, provide strong human interest angles. Chapter 8 discusses some of the cultural and social pressures that newspaper editors in the South Pacific have to face such as trying to get people to state the cause of their illness and share their story.

Rogers et al., (1991) followed the agenda-setting process for HIV/AIDS in the United States from June 1981 to December 1988. The researchers discovered a number of personal and political factors that slowed the emergence of HIV/AIDS on the national media agenda. The disease had no familiar face and it had not been acknowledged by the President. But once on the agenda, especially after the death of Rock Hudson, HIV/AIDS was accorded a high visibility. The simple fact was that newsmakers and the general public were for the first time touched in a direct, personal way by the epidemic.

Wallack, Dorfman, Jennigan and Themba (1993) see a combination of roles working together and find it difficult to separate agenda-setting and 'framing'. The media, they argue, have a two-step function.

First, they select certain people and events for attention and therefore set the public agenda. Second, they frame the issue, telling audience what is important to know about the story. The media in effect make problems such as HIV/AIDS visible and define a 'frame' or context within which related events can be interpreted and understood. In this way, by simply publishing an issue, media reports can set the policy agenda and significantly influence political decisions (Wallack et al., 1993: 67).

Editors are also influential in the selection of HIV/AIDS stories. Veitch (1986) describes how news accounts are the outcome of a process of negotiation between reporters, the news desk and the editorial line of the news organisation. "I think we have failed to get through to the people who really make the papers--the editors and sub-editors. They decide what goes in to the pages" (Veitch 1986: 128). Editors, despite their influence, are often not the best qualified to select stories on HIV/AIDS due to lack of interest, knowledge or personal contact with the problem. Hammond and Freimuth (1989) note that in the early years of HIV/AIDS coverage, editors considering carrying a particular HIV/AIDS story or using direct language, would always ask themselves whether their subscribers would like to read this or that at the breakfast table. Nelkin (1991) observes an intrinsic conservatism and caution among mainstream editors and journalists. "They are more likely to cover problems that might affect their middle-class readers than 'other' groups" (Nelkin, 1991b: 302). Nelkin argues that they tend to avoid issues that may threaten the prevailing social, moral or economic values.

At its most basic level, the agenda-setting process of the media is seen as essentially providing the first step towards public awareness. Subsequently, by withholding attention, the media can sideline important issues. Baker (1986) asserts the media can influence public health policy by helping to put health issues on the public agenda. Baker's (1986) analysis of HIV/AIDS coverage in the United States suggests the media may have encouraged policy makers to respond to the

HIV/AIDS crisis by warning them of the potential threat to mainstream constituents (Baker, 1986; 185). This point is of vital significance to PNG and the South Pacific countries who rely on the media to inform them about what is happening in their communities.

Gaining access to the media in order to highlight a particular issue may depend on where it falls in a cyclic media attention span. Downs (1972) has identified a well-ordered 'issues-attention cycle' for health problems such as alcohol and drug abuse. The first stage is the 'pre-problem stage' when the health problem fully exists and can be serious, but is yet to be discovered and seen as a problem by the broad public. The second stage is 'alarmed discovery and euphoric enthusiasm' by the media and mainstream public. The third stage involves a realisation that to make significant progress, change may be necessary and that this will require sacrifice (Downs 1972: 42). From this stage, Downs (1972) concedes that it does not take long before there is a decline in public interest and pessimism about whether change can take place at all. The final part, 'the postproblem' stage, is a kind of twilight zone in which the problem continues to exist but receives little media attention. When the media spotlight fades, attention recedes. The lack of media spotlight causes issues gradually to fall out of public discussion and to lose a sense of legitimacy and urgency (Downs, 1972: 46). As I discuss in later chapters, Down's 'issue-attention cycle' theory corresponds closely to what has happened with press coverage of HIV/AIDS in many western countries and to what is currently happening in the PNG press.

Wallack et al ., (1993), meanwhile, point to commercial pressures as the prime reason for the lack of attention given to serious health issues.

The media shift because they sense that people are bored with the issue or because some new, more pressing problem has emerged. The media, after all, are in the business of attracting large audiences and if they bore or threaten people because the

solutions are complex or call for personal sacrifice, they will lose their audience and their economic base (Wallack et al., 1993: 82).

4 . 3 The media and attitude/behavioural change

Surveys on behavioural change have shown how hard it is for many people to adopt a cause-and-effect analysis to a behaviour that extends over decades. For example, surveys that have examined the depth of peoples' understanding towards the dangers of smoking, find that sizeable minorities of smokers do not appreciate even the most rudimentary facts of smoking and health (Hertog, Finnegan and Kahn, 1994: 303). Clearly, there has been a breakdown in communication of the health risks involved in tobacco use. Even if the media try to inform and educate the public, how many people are still at the stage of denial and subsequently avoid such information? As yet, there is insufficient research on readers' reaction to HIV/AIDS messages and about how they read and understand the messages. In regard to smoking, even if people possess the facts, they can often discount the personal relevance of those risks. Rather, they will perceive them as applying to other people because they have not internalised generalised risks. Netter (1993) argues that if the media were such a powerful source of public education, nobody in the United States would be smoking cigarettes. While the media can raise the level of fear and concern, it takes more than this to move people to take rational, pragmatic action (Netter, 1993: 249).

The notion that knowledge of HIV/AIDS does not necessarily promote change in sexual behaviour is becoming well documented. Baldwin and Baldwin (1988) conducted surveys that show that while people can be very knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS, only a few perceive a personal risk of acquiring the infection and few reported any intention of being tested for HIV. This discrepancy between adequate

levels of HIV/AIDS knowledge and inadequate levels of behavioural risk reduction reveals the limited effectiveness of the media in this area.

Difficulties with the media's ability to affect behavioural change were evident with HIV/AIDS messages in the United States media. Despite the fact that HIV/AIDS awareness among adults is virtually universal, large numbers of Americans continue to engage in behaviours that put them at risk of HIV infection (Brown, 1988: 168). By the early 1990s, the percentage of Americans that perceived the HIV/AIDS crisis as personally relevant to them was still zero (Kroger, 1993). People were not persuaded that it might concern them and so failed to respond with self-protective behavioural choices.

Valdiserri, Lyter, Kingsley, Leviton, Schofield, Higgins, Ho and Rinaldo (1987) have shown that changes of attitudes towards high-risk sexual behaviour are likely to succeed when small groups are targeted rather than making a blanket attempt to reach everyone. Aggleton and Homans (1989) support this view arguing that such methods are more effective than impersonal media reports because they impart information by word of mouth and personal contact. Yet, most media reports still target the general public without acknowledging the differing needs of certain groups (Edgar, Fitzpatrick, Friemuth, 1992: 107). Wallack (1988) argues that to effect change, HIV/AIDS needs to be placed and understood in a wider social context. "Public health problems such as HIV/AIDS are linked to wider social conditions and in addition have economic and political components." (Wallack, 1988: 14)

In the early 1980s, research into press coverage of public health issues, highlighted the concept of 'mobilising information' (MI). Kristiansen and Harding (1984) define MI as information that mobilises people into considering behavioural adjustments in the face of serious harmful threats. The researchers argue that the media, and particularly

the press, are commonly used as sources of information about health issues because the public rarely refers to specialised medical journals. The media, therefore, play an important role in alerting the public to health issues. The effectiveness of the media in this regard depends on how health issues are discussed. Often, they are omitted and this leaves the public remaining ignorant of ongoing health concerns (Kristiansen and Harding, 1984: 364).

Kristiansen and Harding (1984) became concerned about the standard of health reporting in Britain after analysing articles about health issues in seven British national newspapers. These included; The Times, Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, Daily Express and Sun. The research, undertaken during a two-month period between July - September 1981, described coverage of health issues as modest and lacking in essential information.

Articles usually originated from daily events and described health issues superficially. Hence it is understandable that the public did not regard health as an on-going concern and only becomes concerned about health when something goes wrong. Such results call for greater attention to health issues generally, and more in-depth coverage, and the use of more reliable sources of information, or at least the specification of sources so that the readers can evaluate the reliability of information (Kristiansen and Harding, 1984: 370).

Kristiansen and Harding (1984) try to explain the lack of interest in health matters by stressing that "if the press appreciated the public's interest in health it would devote more attention to health" (Kristiansen and Harding, 1984: 370). When reporting on health issues, these researchers encourage the inclusion of MI because it fosters feelings of greater control and the possibility of behavioural change in the face of serious health hazards.

Such communications are likely to promote a given behaviour when specific details about actions that will counteract or prevent the health threat are explicitly and precisely described (Kristiansen and Harding 1984: 365).

Lemert (1984), however, states that the media rarely provide MI in health reports because they regard it as dull and expendable. The preference is to focus on the issue rather than facilitate public participation (Lemert, 1984: 243). Another reason concerns journalists who either withhold or provide MI depending on what the context of the news item is. Lemert (1984) argues that journalists do this because they confuse mobilising information with mobilising messages and regard the latter as clearly partisan. This tilts the scales in favour of a particular group or concern. (Lemert, 1984: 244).

Other researchers point to a more fundamental requirement: that basic information in health articles needs to be understood. Dervin (1981) has stressed that information in health articles is often couched in technical jargon and will have an impact only when it is presented in a way which allows the public to make sense of it (Dervin, 1981: 77). Taylor and Thompson (1982) argue that articles which use photographs together with concrete rather than abstract language, and that present case histories rather than purely statistical information, are more vivid and attract the reader's attention (Taylor and Thompson, 1982: 58).

5. The educational role of the news media .

The potential educational role of the media figures prominently in studies related to media coverage of HIV/AIDS. The debate concerns whether the media are limited to a purely informational role or whether they should provide an educational input. The distinction is important because while the informational content of the media tries to impart essential facts in an accurate and balanced way, an educational input

should add to the readers' understanding of HIV/AIDS or reinforce existing knowledge. The main arguments center on whether the media have 'the means' or 'the mandate' to expand the content of news stories on health, and in particular, coverage of HIV/AIDS.

Many researchers point to the organisational constraints and traditional news gathering practices as major obstacles to improving the educational content of health-related news stories (Wallack, 1988; Colby and Cook, 1992). These obstacles include: over-reliance on traditional 'news value' criteria for news stories which results in coverage of unusual and dramatic events rather than stories providing useful health information (Kristiansen and Harding, 1984; Miller and Williams, 1993; Beharrell, 1993); rarely mentioning 'mobilising information' such as preventive measures, and virtually ignoring factors such as causes and treatments (Kristiansen and Harding 1984); reinforcing conventional definitions of health problems to fit routine news practice (Wallack, 1988); sensationalising and trivialising issues and ignoring context (Wallack, 1988); using entertaining news elements such as sensational headlines, lead paragraphs and photographs, often resulting in reduced concern over the seriousness of the issues involved (Ericson et al., 1987); a heavy reliance on official and well known sources while ignoring involved but unknown sources (Aroni 1992; Colby and Cook 1992); and unquestioning acceptance of 'medicalised' perspectives on AIDS (McAllister, 1992). Other barriers include educational news copy being altered because of differences in knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS issues between journalists and their sub-editors (Miller and William, 1993); and the growing routinization of HIV/AIDS stories promoting less vigilance (Colby and Cook, 1992).

A closer examination of the organizational constraints faced by journalists when reporting on HIV/AIDS reveals the complexity of the issue. Nelkin (1987) refers to the pressure that journalists are under from their

newsrooms who want definitive answers. Also, the quest for certainty leads journalists to convey the idea that science is a solution to the problem of complicated issues (Nelkin, 1987: 59). Ericson et al., (1987) argue that the general staff reporter does not know a great deal about HIV/AIDS. With very few exceptions, journalists do not have specialist knowledge in the field they report on. This is not a matter of low standards for the occupation but an explicit recognition by newsroom managers that specialist knowledge is not required to get the job done. Specialist knowledge can be counter productive, leading the reporter to look for complexity and to qualify his knowledge, when what news discourse requires is a simple transformation into common sense (Ericson et al., 1987: 176).

Aggleton and Homans (1989) doubt whether the media is able to provide effective public health education. "Journalists are not trained to be educators. There is no classroom or controlled setting, no teacher to provide answers to questions or immediately correct misunderstandings" (Aggleton et al., 1989: 56). This lack of checks and balances, claim the researchers, allowed the media to misinform the public by suggesting that HIV/AIDS affects certain groups rather than being associated with particular behaviours (Aggleton, 1989: 56).

The lack of knowledge among journalists of medical issues led researchers Galvin and Pearson (1994) to expose a tendency among medical writers in Australia to rely heavily on single source material, which was evident when doctors were consulted for stories and comments which often led to "negotiation rather than confrontation" (Galvin and Pearson, 1994: 110). They found the Medical Journal of Australia (MJA) so highly rated that "in most cases the MJA was used alone for the story without clarification or follow up from other sources" (Galvin and Pearson, 1994: 114). The researchers revealed that journalists were unable to link medical stories to wider issues and that journalists

often failed to make obvious the distinction in coverage between “the original research which was peer reviewed and opinion pieces which were published as letters” (Galvin and Pearson, 1994: 119). The mainstream press, they argue, showed an over-reliance on news agency copy, a tendency to confuse medical research with individual doctors’ opinions, a deference to doctors as the primary authorities on health related matters, an unqualified acceptance of their findings and a reluctance to provide readers with background information (Galvin and Pearson, 1994: 109).

The unsuitability of journalists to report fairly and accurately on medical issues is discussed by Cohen (1993) who questions the ability of journalists to interpret statistical evidence and record it accurately.

Journalists usually tend to err in the direction of over-interpretation ...You can’t usually write a snappy lead upholding the negative. We almost have to overstate to come as close as we can within the boundaries of truth to a dramatic compelling statement. A weak statement will go nowhere (Cohen, 1993: 43).

Cohen argues that the media tend to over-simplify when there is a lack of space or the desire to increase the impact of a story. This can lead journalists to omit “an essential perspective with a heavy reliance on ‘authorities’ who are either most colourfully quotable or quickly quotable” (Cohen, 1993: 44).

Galvin and Pearson (1994) stress that the problem lies with the very nature of news writing.

Journalists must develop an angle, human interest story or dramatic event that will define their writing as news. Then the writing must fit the inverted pyramid style of reporting which positions the most ‘newsworthy’ pieces of information at the top of any story with the result that many less newsworthy but no less important details or explanatory facts are hidden at the end of the story (Galvin and Pearson, 1994: 109).

Meanwhile, journalists often defend their selection or omission of health stories by appealing to certain 'news values' which often reveal a genuine conflict between newsworthiness and other conceptions of their role (Beyer, 1998: 183). An example of this is the demand for objectivity and fairness. This forces reporters to balance different views and to give equal time to different theories. So medical stories will often include an emphasis on competing interests, disputed data, and conflicting judgements about hazards. This leads journalists to adopt a middle-of-the-road approach to the problem and results in the reporting of evidence that is often inconsistent and confused (Cohen, 1993 : 46).

Atkin and Wallack (1990) highlight the difficulties journalists face when writing health stories, by referring to the differing priorities of media and health officials.

For example, the aims of the media could be seen as wanting to entertain, persuade or inform; to make a profit; to reflect society; to address personal concerns; to cover short term events and to deliver salient pieces of material. Public health institutions, on the other hand, want to educate; to improve public health; to change society; to address societal concerns; to conduct long term campaigns; to create understanding of complex information (Atkin and Wallack, 1990: 16).

Klaidman (1990) re-emphasizes how the imperatives of journalism differ from those of health professionals. Newsmakers are interested in the novel, the sensational, the human interest angle and the dramatic. This tension between journalists and health professionals is clearly stated by Lupton, Chapman and Wong (1993b). Referring to journalists, the researchers state: "Their task is to sell their commodity - news - not to serve as the campaigning arm of health education bodies. The manner in which journalists report issues such as HIV/AIDS can therefore detract from the goals of health educators" (Lupton et al., 1993b: 6). It is,

moreover, generally recognised that educating the public about HIV/AIDS is not solely the responsibility of media. Moreover, scientists and public health officials have often done poorly in educating and cultivating journalists and in trying to be accessible and share information (Miller and Williams, 1993: 136).

Such defensive arguments on the difficulties faced by journalists have not silenced other critics. While claiming the media was an important channel for communicating health messages, Wellings (1988) pointed to the problem of journalists paying too much selective attention to particular types of evidence compared with others, or simply getting it wrong" (Wellings, 1983: 83). For example, he argues that British national press coverage seemed to create and reinforce misunderstandings about HIV/AIDS by being "far from accurate in its identification of the causes of AIDS , the scale of the epidemic, the groups most affected by it and the means by which the disease is transmitted" (Wellings, 1988: 103).

Several commentators criticised journalists for creating a moral panic on the part of the general public (Watney, 1987; Treichler, 1989; Patton, 1990). The expression 'moral panic', first coined by Cohen (1972), is created by sensationalist reporting, inaccurate and confusing language, and by the consistent linking of the epidemic to deviant groups. This, together with the moral tone of the news coverage and its focus on high risk groups, distorted the overall picture of the epidemic and helped to stigmatise those with AIDS (Nelkin, 1991b: 304). Also, an over-emphasis on death and frightening statistics with an under-emphasis on HIV/AIDS prevention was designed to sell newspapers rather than increase public understanding of the disease (Panos, 1990: 57).

Kotulak (1993) highlights a significant amount of biased stereotyping with coverage of HIV/AIDS. Instead of defining HIV/AIDS as a serious public health risk that could be transmitted through sexual and drug related activities, some reporters framed the epidemic as a problem of "gays and druggies" and therefore not worth much attention in the mainstream press.

Ratzan (1993) argues that the media could have given clearer educational messages about the dangers of HIV/AIDS. Referring to media coverage of HIV/AIDS during the first decade in the United States, the researcher believes the media has been ineffective in encouraging an adequate public response to the HIV/AIDS threat.

Information has been presented but usually in non-involving, neutral and objective forms that a receiver could easily selectively avoid (Ratzan, 1993: 184).

Ratzan questions whether the press pandered to public feelings of avoidance rather than trying to educate them.

Media coverage that panders to the audience by giving people the content they want, generates a false and self-deceptive sense of security and distracts them from focusing on the information they objectively and demonstrably need to act effectively in their own self interests (Ratzan, 1993: 183).

The researcher suggests that the approach of giving people what they want to hear should be replaced by giving the public what they need to hear.

The economic self interest of media shareholders in pandering to the mass media's self-destructive avoidance, while rationalising that they are serving the public interest through exercise of the First Amendment rights, appears to dominate the editorial policy regarding coverage of HIV/AIDS (Ratzan, 1993: 183).

What could aid the educational role of the media according to Meldrum (1990) is the use of specialist reporters and a distinction between specialist reporters covering health and medicine and general reporters. Meldrum notes that specialists correspondents have been appalled at some of the antics of general reporters. Few reporters, however, have a scientific or medical background which often results in scientists and doctors being viewed as the main source of authority. Seldom do the press explore the scientific issues and readers are left with little or no basis for making meaningful judgements about competing medical claims (Meldrum, 1990: 79).

Patton (1990) encourages journalists to appreciate the complexity of the issues related to HIV/AIDS and argues that they must do more than present information which seems accurate, clear and accessible because popular understandings of information are constantly in flux. Media consumers' interpretive processes are complex and even the most straightforward media effort can result in many unanticipated interpretations.

Clear-cut relationships between media consumption and the individual or social attitudes or behaviours are difficult to quantify because media use and interpretation are embedded in complex social networks. No media message is interpretation free (Patton, 1990: 31).

Lupton (1994) notes that the aims and requirements of journalists have changed during the different phases of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and consequently, the supply of information has differed greatly. Lupton (1994) refers to the improvement of HIV/AIDS coverage in the Australian press during the early 1990s which she describes as less sensational and is encouraged by the employment of more specialist reporters. These, according to Miller and Williams (1993), are more likely to recognise that what they write could affect their readers and regard themselves as

“socially responsible educators”. Moreover, Beharrell (1993: 242) argues that the use of specialist reporters rather than general reporters does reduce the level of sensationalism involved in a story.

Atkin and Wallack (1990) are confident that the media are still a potentially influential vehicle in which to spread basic, yet accurate and educationally responsible information about HIV/AIDS. By helping to keep the issue in the public domain, the media can assist health promoters to maintain HIV/AIDS awareness and keep it on the political and cultural agenda. It is likely that accurate and well informed news coverage of the epidemic could lead to a reduction in the stereotyping, misinformation and sensationalising surrounding popular understandings of HIV/AIDS (Atkin and Wallack, 1990: 28).

5.1 Reporting risk behaviour

When journalists report on risk behaviours, medical practitioners and scientists frequently criticise them for failing to grasp important distinctions in scientific information. This was highlighted by Kitzinger (1993) in the British press, which up until the late 1980s failed to distinguish between the two terms, HIV and AIDS, dismissing ‘HIV’ as a “fancy word for AIDS” (Kitzinger, 1993: 284). The researcher, Watney (1989), saw this lack of distinction between HIV and AIDS as a major problem in that it ignored the fact that HIV figures were more beneficial in understanding the growth of the epidemic because the AIDS figures related to “the transmission events that took place, on average, some ten years ago” (Watney 1989: 183).

Nelkin (1991) is both critical and yet understanding of the media’s performance on reporting risk. To begin with, journalists must cope with complex and uncertain technical information and sort out conflicting

scientific opinions. Even the definition of 'risk' may rest on prevailing social or cultural biases. Nelkin stresses the frequent criticisms of risk reporting partly reflect differences in the way scientists and journalists employ the language of risk. Journalists write for diverse audiences and, while scientists talk of aggregate data, reporters focus on the immediate concerns of their readers: 'Will I be harmed?' But Nelkin acknowledges that scientists worry that incorrect health risk information can cause unnecessary panic (Nelkin, 1991a: 64).

In an attempt to improve this situation, Galvin and Pearson (1994) stress that a high standard of professionalism and credibility can only be reached if the journalists understand "the scientific process and adapt information to the news format with as little loss of precision as possible" (Galvin and Pearson, 1994: 120). But the reality in the newsroom makes Galvin and Pearson's suggestion seem somewhat idealistic and unattainable.

Lupton et al., (1993) warn the media about the consequences of confining the issue of risk merely to risk groups while failing to report risk behaviours. It is possible, they argue, for this omission to lead to complacency and this in itself creates a new threat (Lupton et al., 1993b: 14). The researchers add that an individual's natural tendency for denial of risk could be supported by press reports of safety. If the press continues to report that the disease is no longer a problem in Australia, further efforts to continue HIV/AIDS education campaigns may be weakened.

Public attitudes may turn to those apparent in the early days of the epidemic when AIDS was reported as the disease of the 'other' that is a problem in other countries but not at home, a problem confined largely to homosexual men but posing little threat to the general public (Lupton et al., 1993b: 14).

Other researchers wonder whether including information about risk behaviour, however correctly or incorrectly reported, will make any difference. Kitzinger (1993) stresses that in terms of risk, people are influenced more by their peers and social contacts than by their knowledge of technical details. The limited impact of the media to influence attitudes towards an issue is upheld by Nelkin (1991) who states that the general thrust of communications research shows the media are not the primary source of public attitudes and ideas. They may have significant influence but this depends on a number of contextual factors (Nelkin, 1991b: 303). Patton (1990) expands this point and argues that the perceived relevance of information on risk behaviour in relation to HIV/AIDS will be affected by whether HIV/AIDS is initially viewed as of concern to individuals, communities, nations, or a mix of them.

For example, small communities in West African countries often first heard about AIDS in sensationalist Francophone or Anglophone radio broadcasts from Europe. These were variously dismissed as a European plot or a catalyst for concern that the government was not taking appropriate steps. Likewise, conflicts in local and national media with their differing political investments shape the interpretive practices of individuals and groups (Patton, 1990: 33).

6. Homophobia in the news media

Although this question has not surfaced in the South Pacific because of comparatively low incidences of homosexuality, it has been a dominant issue in connection with media coverage of HIV/AIDS in other parts of the world. Some researchers suggest that the prominence and frequency of the 'gay plague' metaphor revealed a deeper ideological struggle that was openly homophobic. One reason for this was that the connection of gay men with HIV/AIDS resulted in a slippage between the idea that gay men caused 'the plague' to the idea that homosexuality itself was a plague (Weeks, 1989), (Watney, 1989), (Lupton, 1994).

Lupton (1994) argues that homosexuals in the Australian press were rarely given sympathetic attention. One example Lupton provided concerned how greater sympathy was extended to people with medically acquired HIV/AIDS when compared with the representation of gay men living with HIV/AIDS. This imbalance, Lupton believes, was symptomatic of 'overt homophobia', more blatantly prevalent in the early years of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Australian press. What still remains, Lupton stresses, is "an equally discriminatory silence about the mounting number of deaths of gay men while the small number of children were publicly mourned" (Lupton, 1994: 124). In Britain, Wellings (1988) claims the human faces given to people with AIDS (PWAs) have been predominantly those of heterosexuals (Wellings, 1988: 92).

Lupton (1994) views the Australian media as willingly supporting official attempts "to engender a new morality" and a "continuing ideology of homophobia in the continued marginalisation of the plight of gay men compared with other people living with AIDS" (Lupton, 1994: 124). She refers to conservative moral values underlying anti-gay HIV/AIDS discourses:

One of the strongest threads running through the subtextual layer of meaning in AIDS discourses in the news media has been the State's attempt to control sexual expression in any form not conforming to heterosexual monogamy (Lupton, 1994: 125).

Lupton (1994) suggested, moreover, that the dominant framework for AIDS reporting had been established early on: "AIDS had been socially constructed as a disease of deviance" (Lupton, 1994: 125).

Weeks (1989) finds it unfortunate that the HIV/AIDS epidemic first appeared in medical and press circles when it affected gay men in the United States. "This historical accident - as if HIV/AIDS was a peculiar

property of gay men when most transmissions have probably been heterosexual - narrowed the focus of reporting" (Weeks 1989 : 18). Shilts (1987) claimed the news media in the United States regarded HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s as a homosexual problem and did not like covering such stories.

It was especially skittish about stories that involved gay sexuality. Newspapers and television largely avoided discussion of the disease until the death toll was too high (Shilts, 1987: 22).

Albert (1986) is not so critical and concludes his research on media reports of HIV/AIDS with the statement: "Media coverage of AIDS does not appear, for the most part, to have been intentionally stigmatising" (Albert, 1986b: 176). He adds, however, that the media tended to approach the story in ways that appeared to reaffirm the outcast status of at risk groups, especially homosexual men (Albert, 1986b: 177).

Solomon and Cohen (1997), however, reaffirm the trend to target the gay community.

Despite numerous risk groups which have been associated with HIV/AIDS, the disease has maintained its greatest hold on the public imagination in terms of its connection to gay and bisexual men...This perception coincides with an underlying and prevalent homophobia (Solomon and Cohen , 1997: 122).

These two researchers stress that anti-gay prejudices, combined with a common view of HIV/AIDS as a gay disease, continue to hamper efforts to address HIV/AIDS as a health issue not only for gays and bisexual men but for women, for intravenous drug users and for other populations.

On a positive note, Lupton (1994) claims that by 1986 there was a change in Australia with discourses about HIV/AIDS. Lupton described a

shift from reporting only about reviled deviant risk groups to a discourse which extended the risk wholesale to every individual regardless of sexual activities. The emphasis moved to promoting individual behavioural change (Lupton, 1994: 316). This, she argues, has continued with a 'toning down' of reporting with less sensationalism and less emphasis on sexual preferences.

7. The reporting of HIV/AIDS and other historical plagues.

Some researchers have examined possible comparisons between the reporting of HIV/AIDS and other plagues. Firstly, it must be stated that no two epidemics are the same in causes, courses or consequences. But unlike the plagues which afflicted Europe, Asia and the Middle East in different forms and intensity, HIV/AIDS, at least in its current virulent epidemic form, appears to have unclear origins. Gallo (1987), whose research team played an important role in identifying the human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV) and its role in precipitating AIDS, suggests that the HIV virus was possibly due to transmission from animal to human and from a remote section of the world to the developed world (Gallo, 1987: 42).

The sociologist, Vliet (1996), highlights a number of other discrepancies between the reporting of HIV/AIDS and other historical plagues. Whatever the ultimate demographic outcome, he argues that HIV/AIDS has a different modus operandi from the Black Death or the Mexican smallpox epidemic. Both these pandemics came and went within a short space of time. In contrast, by the time the first AIDS cases were diagnosed, HIV had already been in existence among us for many years, silently laying the groundwork for an epidemic. The long latency period ensured that a healthy looking HIV infected person could unwittingly spread the virus (Vliet, 1996 : 20).

However, there were some similarities between the reporting of HIV/AIDS and other historical plagues. In its search for a scapegoat to blame for the great plague epidemic, Europe picked the Jews. In Basle, Switzerland, during January 1349, several hundred Jews were burned and the Jewish ghetto of Trastevere in Rome, where the plague had claimed early victims, was sealed off and patrolled by guards. "Violators were executed by firing squad or hanged from gallows. Like witch hunting, they sought and found scapegoats" (Vliet,1996: 26). Likewise, HIV/AIDS also produced fear and panic; scapegoats were found and initially narrowed to gays but later expanded to include "druggies" and prostitutes. Another classic example of 'victim blaming' occurred during the plague of 1656 in Rome, when prostitutes and the poor were singled out for condemnation. Tuchman (1987) offers an explanation:

While divine punishment was accepted as the plague's source, people in their misery still looked for a human agent upon whom to vent the hostility that could not be vented on God (Tuchman, 1987: 109).

But viewed historically, media coverage of HIV/AIDS probably has a more striking similarity with previous moral panics about sexual disease. 'Deviant behaviour' was closely linked to media coverage of other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). During and immediately after the first world war there was a rush of cinema films about venereal disease (VD) which implied that sexual promiscuity led to VD which was presented as virulently contagious and an ever present threat to the public's social and physical well being. And again with 'herpes' in the early 1980s, the media opted for a fear-based approach with headlines such as "Nature fights back" and "The end of sexual freedom" (Karpf, 1988: 142). In both cases, VD and herpes, the media's focus on sexual contact as the cause, led to " setting up sexual abstinence, monogamy and even celibacy as the remedy, and suggesting that the sufferer was

both the agent and the victim of their suffering" (Karpf, 1988: 142). When HIV/ AIDS came, herpes went, at least from the media. Apart from deaths, HIV/AIDS had something else that herpes did not possess: an already stigmatised social group to scapegoat.

There is some debate about whether HIV/AIDS stories displaced other health stories. Hertog et al., (1994) undertook a survey of the number of HIV/AIDS, STDs and cancer stories covered by Associated Press (AP) in the United States during a ten-year period from 1980-1990. Their findings show that a slight downward trend in cancer coverage occurred at the same time as there was a huge increase in AIDS coverage. Although HIV/AIDS coverage declined sharply during the 1988-1990 period, cancer and STD coverage did not rebound. No serious displacement effect can be found in AP, and little if any effect could be found in a study of several selected newspapers from 1985-1990 (Hertog et al., 1994: 301). One possible explanation is that the gradual reduction in cancer coverage was under way before the development of HIV/AIDS as a major health problem.

Summary :

Western media initially framed and constructed HIV/AIDS as a disease of deviance mainly restricted to 'gays'. This misinformation was reinforced with the use of negative language and images, most notably the constant use of the 'gay plague' metaphor which suggested that both homosexuality and homosexuals were the cause of HIV/AIDS. This social construction of the disease left a lasting impression. Many still view HIV/AIDS as a predominantly gay-related disease.

It is, however, unfair to condemn totally the media for under-estimating the wider ramifications of HIV/AIDS when it first appeared,

and to write as if a consensus that a new virus, HIV, was the cause of AIDS and that this conclusion was instantly and painlessly reached. It took at least several years to achieve agreement among the scientists about the cause and routes of transmission. The media did eventually correct its earlier over-emphasis on risk groups instead of risk behaviours. Throughout the late 1980s, news reports improved in tone and content from the initial phase of panic reporting and dramatic headlines to routine news stories.

Academic debate has focused on the role of the media, especially its capability to define an event and keep it in the public domain. Despite evident organisational constraints and traditional news gathering practices, there is a consensus that, regardless of these limitations and the difficulty of effecting behavioural change, the media have the ability to improve awareness, knowledge and understanding of the disease. To achieve this, some researchers have pointed to the need for closer attention to the use of language, improving the educational content of news stories, avoiding the frequent practice of relying on general rather than trained medical reporters, highlighting risk behaviour instead of over-emphasising risk groups and framing HIV/AIDS as a current instead of a past event so as to avoid complacency and the resurfacing of denial. These observations are relevant to the current situation of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG.

Chapter 3

Method

The Problem

HIV/AIDS came late to PNG. Yet, despite the opportunity to learn from press coverage in other parts of the world, the press in PNG during the 1990s followed the three distinct patterns of reporting that occurred with coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Western press and African press during the 1980s; initially a slow response in which high-risk groups were targeted as the main offenders and sufferers, followed by increased coverage with the acknowledged risk of HIV infection to the wider heterosexual population. Finally, the disease was 'routinized' and treated as just another routine health story.

The central hypothesis of this thesis states that press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG repeated (to varying degrees) the distinct, threefold chronological pattern found in the reporting of HIV/AIDS in the Western and African press, and subsequently repeated the mistakes they made, most notably the aspects of stereotyping, sensationalism and complacency. This study also tries to test a second hypothesis developed by Singer and Endreny (1987) that the media do not report 'risks' and ways to prevent contracting illnesses. Instead, they prefer to concentrate mainly on the 'harms' that diseases cause such as long-term suffering and possible death. The author wants to discover if similar findings to those of Singer and Endreny (1987) can be found with press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG. If the results of this hypothesis reveal an absence of emphasis on 'risks', it would challenge the current position of editors in PNG who have expressed in various interviews (Chapter 7) a strong desire to highlight clear messages about risk behaviour and ways to avoid contracting the HIV virus.

Method

In health research, the methodology used to document media representations has generally adopted a quantitative approach. This study, therefore, has opted primarily for the quantitative content analysis which involves the systematic quantification of frequencies of categories within texts which can be represented numerically and analysed by computer (Berelson, 1952). The central focus of the quantitative content involves an in-depth analysis of articles on HIV/AIDS in the major English PNG newspapers covering a ten-year period from June 1987 - when the first HIV case was discovered in PNG - until December 1997 when the PNG government officially acknowledged the need to respond to the increasing spread of HIV/AIDS in the country by setting up the National AIDS Council (NAC).

The newspapers chosen for the research include PNG's only two national daily newspapers, The National and Post-Courier together with The Independent and The Eastern Star, PNG'S only provincial newspaper. These titles were selected because they were considered by the author to be PNG's four major English newspapers. Wantok, the largest selling weekly newspaper in PNG, is printed in Tok Pidgin. To avoid any misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the Tok Pidgin texts, the author focused on newspapers that used English. Instead of selecting cuttings on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, the author decided to review every news item that appeared on HIV/AIDS from June 1987 - when the first HIV case was discovered in PNG - to December 1997 when the National AIDS Council (NAC) was set up. This amounted to 642 cuttings: Post Courier (368); The National (130); The Independent (138); The Eastern Star (6). Selecting all newspaper cuttings on HIV/AIDS from 1987-1997 was adopted so that they could be treated as a continuity rather than as isolated pieces of information. This helped to present an

overall picture and establish the emergence of three distinct stages that evolved with the reporting HIV/AIDS in PNG.

In order to chart recent developments of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG, the author surveyed every news items that appeared on the disease during a two-year period from January 1998 until December 1999 in PNG's two daily newspapers, The National and Post-Courier and The Independent. The selection of all cuttings on HIV/AIDS from 1998-1999 was adopted in order to present the cuttings as a continuity rather than as isolated pieces of information. This made it easier to detect any significant changes in press coverage over the two-year period. A total of 168 cuttings were collected during 1998-1999 amounting to an overall total of 810 newspaper cuttings on HIV/AIDS from 1987-1999.

An attempt was made during the two periods of research (1987 - 1997) and (1998-1999) to interpret the intentions of the editors from the news and information they reported. In doing this the author was aware of the warning of DeFleur and Dennis (1981) on content analysis, that one cannot assume that readers respond to any particular element of content in a direct way. Also, it cannot be assumed that what one finds is there because the communicator deliberately intended it to be there to stimulate some thought or action. While in some cases the intention of the communicator may be obvious, in most cases it cannot be inferred from the content analysis.

Mindful of these limitations, the content analysis identified each newspaper cutting on HIV/AIDS as an editorial, a letter, a local story, a foreign story, a front page story or a feature. 'Foreign story' refers to news items about HIV/AIDS in foreign countries while 'local story' refers to news items on HIV/AIDS within PNG. The phrase 'news item' is used throughout this thesis to incorporate the various types of writing formats such as

feature article, letter to the editor, editorial or local and foreign story. In the tables and graphs, 'news items' are described by the word 'content'.

These categories followed closely those chosen by Kasoma (1990 and 1995) and Pitt and Jackson (1991) when these researchers analysed press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Zambia and Zimbabwe. By dividing HIV/AIDS stories into these six variables, the author was able to determine to some extent, especially in the case of front page stories and editorials, the views of the newspaper towards the disease. Also, the frequent use of foreign rather than local stories in the first period of research seemed to reflect a view that HIV/AIDS was a disease 'out there' and 'not so much here.'

The author is aware that although quantitative content analysis is important in detecting certain patterns in a large mass of data, such analyses of textual content tend more towards the descriptive and can miss the detailed accounts of the language used or identify the discursive formations and ideologies evident in news reports. For the qualitative content analysis, the author wanted to test the finding by Singer and Endreny (1987) that when reporting on health stories, the press do not report on 'risks' but instead concentrate on 'harms'. To achieve this, EVERY newspaper cutting() on HIV/AIDS in the Post-Courier, The National and The Independent from January 1998 until December 1999 WAS read and categorised as workshops, figures, mobilising information, cures, harms and human interest. The subsequent qualitative analysis tried to assess whether or not the various news categories highlighted harms, merely imparted knowledge or gave 'mobilising information' (MI) about risks and ways to prevent infection.

The notion of MI, developed by researchers Lemert (1981), Kristiansen and Harding (1984), was discussed in the Literature Review. In

brief, the concept of MI emphasises that news stories on health should include information that allows the reader to participate in taking some form of preventive action instead of providing information that evokes only a passive submission from the reader. This concept was considered as particularly relevant to this thesis since previous studies on the inclusion of MI in health reporting show that “ such communications are more likely to promote a given behaviour when specific details about actions which will counteract or prevent the health threat are explicitly and precisely described (Kristiansen and Harding, 1984: 243). When interviewed about press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG, several editors in that country expressed a strong interest to include this type of information in their news reports on HIV/AIDS (Chapter 8).

Background

There were several reasons for selecting PNG as the main focus of this research. Firstly, it has the highest number of HIV/AIDS in the whole of the Pacific region and predictions are that this number is set to rise dramatically in the coming years (UNAIDS 1999b). Secondly, PNG is recognised as the country that has the largest news media in the Pacific (Robie, 1999). No one, however, has researched press reports of HIV/AIDS in PNG. The author, who worked in the country as a journalism educator for two years, was concerned that PNG newspapers were failing in their watchdog role to inform the public, in an adequate way, of this serious public health threat. PNG was also singled out because it is the largest country with the biggest population in the Pacific. It covers nearly 80 per cent of land area in the region and is home to 4.6 million people out of a total Pacific population of 6.6 million (Andrews, 1997: 9).

The newspapers

The Post-Courier (1969) is the largest selling South Pacific daily with a circulation of 28,000 (Philemon, 1999). It is Australian-owned with Murdoch's News Limited holding 62.5 per cent of the shares while private shareholders account for 27.5 per cent. The National (1993) has a circulation of 24,000 and is Malaysian-owned with Monarch Investments, a subsidiary of timber company Rimbunan Hijau, holding 51 per cent of the shares (Robie, 1999). The Independent (1986) (formerly The Times of Papua New Guinea and then The Saturday Independent) is wholly owned by Media Holdings Pty Limited. The shareholders are the mainstream churches in PNG: Catholic (60 per cent); Evangelical Lutheran (20 per cent); Anglican (10 per cent); United (10 per cent). Its weekly circulation is under 8,000 (Solomon, 1999) while The Eastern Star (1991), locally owned, is a fortnightly and sells just under 2,500 copies.

Field Work:

The field work began in June 1998 with visits to Fiji, Tonga and Samoa to assist the UN-sponsored workshops in these countries on 'Reporting HIV/AIDS in the Pacific'. This first trip lasted one month. This was followed by three more trips; to Papua New Guinea (two weeks); New Caledonia (one week) and Tahiti (one week) to interview the editors of the major newspapers in these countries. Where possible, health reporters were interviewed together with medical personnel. In 1999, three further trips were undertaken: to Micronesia (one week); Papua New Guinea (two weeks); and Fiji (three weeks) (Appendix 12). The major activity involved interviewing editors, collecting archival material and where possible, giving talks to journalists and other media personnel on 'Reporting HIV/AIDS'.

The author obtained important background material by visiting the newspaper archive libraries at The National, Post-Courier and The

Independent in PNG's capital, Port Moresby, and at the Eastern Star in Alotau on the south east coast of the country. Medical research articles on HIV/AIDS in PNG were found at the Medical Institute of Research in the highland town of Goroka. General articles on HIV/AIDS in the south Pacific were photocopied in the library at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Noumea, New Caledonia, and at the United Nations HIV/AIDS resource centre in Suva, Fiji. Websites for The National, Post-Courier and The Independent were surveyed on a daily basis from 1 January 1998 until 31 December 1999.

Interviews.

In order to situate what has happened in PNG on the global map, chapter 4 will examine how HIV/AIDS was reported in other parts of the world namely Australia, Europe, Africa, Asia and North America. To obtain a wider picture of press coverage of HIV/AIDS throughout the South Pacific, the author interviewed 25 newspaper and magazine editors from the region. The editors were chosen, where possible, from the major newspapers and magazines in a particular country. Seven South Pacific countries were selected to reflect the different ethnic groups: Melanesians (Papua New Guinea and Fiji); Polynesians (Tonga and Samoa); French Melanesians (New Caledonia); French Polynesians (Tahiti) and Micronesians (The Federated States of Micronesia). These editors were considered an important source of information by the author because ultimately the editors have considerable influence on the selection of news stories.

The interviews started with an open-ended request for the editors to outline their views and experience of HIV/AIDS. Then, more specific questions (Appendix 5) sought to ascertain the editorial policy of their respective newspapers on HIV/AIDS and how it compared to coverage

of other diseases within their countries. Other questions (Appendix 5) examined how the editors viewed their role: to inform or to educate or both. Finally, the editors were asked about future editorial policy in the light of the expected increase in HIV infections. The interviews ranged in duration from one hour to two hours and a total of 25 interviews were conducted (Appendix 4).

Initially, the author had attempted to formulate a questionnaire with a set of 24 questions and send it to the editors. However, after discussing this idea with the two newspaper editors in PNG (Senge and Philemon), the author decided to shelve the idea. Senge (1999) argued that because of their busy schedules, many editors would either put it in a drawer or throw it in the nearest bin. Face to face interviews were highly recommended by both editors.

Study Limitations.

Sudden political developments on the island of Bougainville meant that two of the three editors in Port Moresby were not available on the author's first trip to PNG in September 1998. This meant planning a second trip which was undertaken in May 1999. Four pre-arranged interviews with editors in other countries, namely Fiji and Tonga, were cancelled and rearranged at short notice.

Two editors refused to be interviewed on the topic. One complained about an over-emphasis on HIV/AIDS while the other cited too many other commitments. Those editors that did agree to be interviewed expressed interest and concern about the subject. Some

asked if training sessions on health reporting could be arranged for their journalists. Those editors who were inexperienced at the focused interview format, constantly strayed from the subject matter of the question. This led to the frequent reframing and repeating of questions.

Difficulties were experienced on some occasions when trying to connect (on a daily basis) to the websites of The National, Post-Courier and The Independent between 1998 and 1999. Press cuttings from 1987-1997 were easier to obtain because the author lived in the country until December 1997. Since this thesis is the first of its kind to examine press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific, it was difficult to obtain documented resource material because of the lack of any previous survey on press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG or the South Pacific.

Chapter 4 **The Global Spread of HIV/AIDS**

This chapter charts briefly the course of emerging HIV/AIDS epidemics throughout the world. The aim is to present an overall picture of the extent of the problem and then to examine in chapters 5 and 6 how the press in various countries reported the disease. This allows the author to analyse in chapter 7 whether the press in PNG during the 1990s repeated the trends and similar mistakes of the Western press in its coverage of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s.

Although AIDS was not recognised as a distinct syndrome until 1981, there is now evidence that HIV infection had been present in Africa for at least two decades before 1980 and that it probably entered the United States and Europe in the mid -1970s (Rushing, 1995: 8). The virus that causes AIDS was identified in 1983 and was officially named the Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV in 1984. Tests for the antibodies became available in 1985.

Initially, in the Western world, HIV/AIDS was first recognised in homosexually active men and injecting drug users. Many people assumed that the disease was exclusively a consequence of either male to male sex or injecting drug use. This assumption had to be revised when it became apparent that there was an extensive heterosexual transmission of HIV in the developing world and in some developed countries. Now the majority of HIV infections diagnosed in the world are transmitted through heterosexual contact (Rushing, 1995 : 8).

In the mid -1980s an attempt was made to explain differences between the HIV/AIDS epidemics in the Western world, Africa and Asia.

Countries were divided into three distinct groups. Countries in the Pattern 1 section (which included Britain, Australia and New Zealand) were those where the major group affected were homosexual men and intravenous drug users as distinct from pattern 2 countries where HIV/AIDS transmission was predominantly heterosexual such as in many Africa countries. Asia and most of the Pacific region were included in pattern 3 countries where HIV/AIDS did not appear until the mid-1980s (Linge and Porter,1997: 15).

Countries in the pattern 3 grouping had the opportunity which was not available to those of pattern 1 and 2. That was to learn from history. Their epidemics were just beginning. But the segregation of patterns soon ended as the epidemic spread. The explosive spread of HIV in Thailand and India in the late 1980s and early 1990s revealed the spread of the HIV virus in Pattern 3 countries to be less accurate and any feeling of complacency unwarranted.

The relentless worldwide surge in HIV infections continues. A report by the joint United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), estimated that at the end of 1999 over 50 million individuals worldwide had been infected with HIV, of whom more than 33 million were still alive and over 16 million had died (UNAIDS, 1999b). The report, AIDS Epidemic Update - December 1999, estimates that 32.4 million adults and 1.2 million children were living with HIV at the end of 1999. AIDS deaths reached a record 2.6 million in 1999 while in the same year HIV infections continued unabated with an estimated 5.6 million adults and children infected (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

<p><u>Adults and children estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS</u> <u>as of the end of 1999.</u></p>
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Sub-Saharan Africa	23. 3 million.
South East Asia.....	6 million.
Latin America	1. 3 million.
North America.....	920,000
West Asia and The Pacific.....	530,000
Western Europe.....	520,000
Caribbean.....	360,000
Eastern Europe and Central Asia.....	360,000
North Africa and Middle East.....	220,000

Source: WHO. 1 December 1999.

More than 95 per cent of all those infected live in the developing world and there are roughly 1,600 new infections every day. In 1999, an estimated 570,000 children aged 14 or younger became infected with HIV (UNAIDS, 1999b). By the end of 1999, the epidemic had left behind a cumulative total of 11.2 million AIDS orphans, defined as those having lost their mother before reaching the age of 15. Many of these maternal orphans have also lost their father.

Dr Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, describes the serious, long-term implications of such figures:

With an epidemic of this scale, every new infection adds to the ripple effect impacting families, committees, households and increasingly, businesses and economies. AIDS has emerged as the single greatest threat to development in many countries of the world (Piot, 1999a).

Piot's remarks re-emphasise an earlier statement made in May 1999 when UNAIDS declared that AIDS had become the number one killer in Africa and had moved up from seventh to fourth place among all causes of death worldwide.

Although AIDS has been with us for just twenty years, it is already killing more people than any other infectious disease. It has the potential to undermine this century's massive improvements in health and the well-being of people around the world. Heart disease, strokes and acute lower respiratory infections are the only causes of death to surpass HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS 1999a: 5).

Sub-Saharan Africa is still the global epicentre of the epidemic accounting for 70 per cent of all people infected with HIV/AIDS. Nine out of ten children infected in 1999 lived in Africa. Countries such as Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe have HIV/AIDS infection rates that account for nearly 25 per cent of their respective populations (UNAIDS: 1999a). UNAIDS and WHO estimate that 12.2 million African women and 10.1 million African men aged 15 - 49 were living with HIV at the end of 1999 (UNAIDS, 1999b).

At the end of 1999, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) revealed that a number of African nations suffered downward changes in the Human Development Index (HDI), a ranking based on levels of health, wealth and education. Almost all the major changes in rank could be attributed to declining life expectancy as a result of HIV/AIDS (UNDP, 1999: 67). For example, life expectancy at birth in southern Africa, which climbed from 44 in the early 1950s to 59 in the early 1990s, is expected to drop back to 45 sometime between 2005 and 2010. UNDP estimates that fewer than 50 per cent of South Africans currently alive can expect to reach the age of 60, compared with an average of 70 per cent for developing countries and 90 per cent for industrialised countries (UNDP: 1999: 68).

The huge gap in HIV infection rates and AIDS deaths between rich and poor countries, and more particularly between Africa and the rest of the world, is likely to grow even larger in the next century. According to

Pitot, this is likely, but not certain if particular corrective measures are undertaken.

Massive national and international efforts may help to end the stifling silence that continues to surround HIV in many countries, to explode the myths and misconceptions that translate into dangerous sexual practices, to expand preventive initiatives such as condom promotion that can reduce sexual transmission, to create the conditions in which adults and young children have the knowledge to be free of HIV (UNAIDS, 1999c).

There are, however, some positive signs. The global AIDS epidemic report (UNAIDS 1999b) highlights some countries and regions which are managing to lower the number of new infections or improve the well-being of those already infected. Evidence continues to mount that well-organised prevention programmes such as those that promote 100 per cent condom use and needle exchange programmes in Thailand and the Philippines have had sustained success in reducing HIV risk and lowering or stabilising HIV rates (UNAIDS, 1999b).

But the threat of HIV has not diminished in any country. There is new evidence from North America and Western Europe suggesting that the availability of life-prolonging therapies may be contributing to an erosion of safer sexual behaviour (UNAIDS, 1999b). On a more positive note, the success of many countries in slowing HIV infection rates show that explosive HIV growth is not inevitable. A host of industrialised countries and a handful of developing nations have managed to stabilise their infection rates and even reverse epidemics that once seemed unstoppable. Thailand and Uganda are the only developing countries where there is nationwide evidence of declining HIV rates clearly linked to strong prevention programmes. Their declines are impressive. Uganda has managed to cut HIV infection rates by more

than 13 per cent in the period from 1994 to 1997. In Thailand HIV cases declined by almost 15 per cent during the same period (UNAIDS 1999b).

Debate about accessibility to effective HIV/AIDS drug treatment is gathering momentum in many developing countries. Relatively effective treatment that dramatically slows the previously inevitable progression from HIV infection to death is available in developed countries like Australia but unaffordable for most developing countries. The treatment consists of drugs called antiretrovirals which target HIV at different stages in its life cycle to prevent its replication and so prolong life. Since 1996 epidemiological studies demonstrate that with the introduction of these drugs, death rates declined in many Western countries. However, the likelihood of supplying these drugs at a cheaper price to poor developing countries is unlikely to occur in the near future (Kent, 2000).

HIV/AIDS in the Pacific Region

Much of the focus on HIV/AIDS analysis throughout the world has been on Africa, Western Europe, America and the emerging situation in Asia. Because of the size of the HIV/AIDS problems in these countries, minimal attention was paid to other less affected areas in the world such as the 21 countries and territories of the Pacific region, which range in size from just a few coral atolls to those consisting of hundreds of islands and countries such as PNG and Fiji made up of islands with relatively large land masses. The term 'Pacific region' refers to islands populated primarily by Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian people and does not include Hawaii and New Zealand. In 1995, the estimated population of the 21 Pacific countries was 6.6 million (Sarda and Harrison, 1995: 6).

While HIV/AIDS came late to the Pacific region, the ability to chart the exact course and extent of the epidemic remains a near-impossible

task because “the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS not only varies from country to country but also within countries (Moodie, 1999: 1). Moodie (1999) notes a considerable variation between reported and actual infection levels and refers to the common use of preconceived ideas about who needs to be tested and the use of easily obtainable samples: “It is much easier to identify and test sex workers than their clients even though the clients might be more likely to travel to other areas and thus contribute to the wider transmission of the virus” (Moodie, 1997: 30). Also, as a result of under-reporting and under-diagnosis, the current figures for HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific probably represent less than 30 per cent of the actual figures (Moodie 1999 : 3).

Vete (1996), country coordinator for United Nations HIV/AIDS programmes in the South Pacific, lists some of the obstacles that prevent the gathering of accurate figures for HIV/AIDS throughout the Pacific region:

Deficiencies in the surveillance and reporting systems within each country; private medical practitioners not reporting cases because of confidentiality and social sensitivity; access to travel opportunities which enable Pacific Islanders greater access to treatment abroad (Vete, 1996: 11).

The long time lag between HIV infection, AIDS and death - more than 10 years on average - helps explain why most Pacific countries have yet to see the damage the epidemic can do to their social and economic fabric. Cullen (1999b) argues that in the South Pacific the hidden nature of the epidemic caused by the low numbers of early AIDS cases and the social invisibility of the behaviours that spread it, makes it difficult to convince policy makers that a problem exists and to persuade them to act. Another factor according to Osuga and Chang(1994) is that the low numbers in HIV infection rates are deceptive since the Pacific Island populations are quite small.

Inevitably the epidemic will eclipse health and other development gains. Preventing new infections is ultimately the best way to avert such impacts. Meanwhile, particular social customs and behaviours create conditions for a potentially rapid HIV transmission in many Pacific countries.

STDs are extremely common in many of the Pacific Island countries. There is much international travel and immigration. Pacific Islanders travel abroad in large numbers for work and family reunions. There are many cultural, social and religious barriers against HIV, STD and sex education. And then there is a debate whether talking about sex and making condoms available promotes promiscuity. Also, women in the Pacific are often not in a position to negotiate or practice safe sex because of the male-female power struggle within the society and a large proportion of the regional population is under 25 years of age and so at the age when sexual activity is highest. If the continued increase in HIV infection in the Pacific is to be halted the barriers described must be removed (Osuga and Chang, 1994: 116).

Several speakers interviewed by the author at the Fifth International Congress on HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific held in Kuala Lumpur from 23-27 October 1999, painted an equally depressing picture of a rapid increase of HIV/AIDS throughout the region. They suggested that it was not unreasonable that the Sub-Saharan African scenario could be repeated in parts of the South Pacific.

Piot (1999), expressed his concern about continued complacency with the disease in the South Pacific.

To be sure progress is not equal in all countries and at the same time the epidemic is still largely ahead of us. Moreover, I hope that none of us assumes that just because a country has low rates today, it is not impossible for those rates to change with frightening speed. Given what we know about the epidemic in other parts of the world, such naivete is unforgivably short-sighted (Piot 1999b).

Piot (1999) compares the emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic in many Pacific countries with what occurred in Africa in the mid-1980s.

The South Pacific region is very vulnerable and it is where Africa was about ten years ago. The lesson from Africa is not to wait till you have 10,15, 20, 25 per cent of the population infected before you start to act. The key problem is how to make peoples, nations, communities, act before more people start dying of AIDS. The main concern for Pacific leaders should not be the current low numbers or lack of alarm but that the problem is already in their countries and that it is spreading. But as we all know, predicting the future is very difficult. But one hopes that South Pacific countries will not wait until people start dying in massive numbers before responding with a vigour that is necessary (Piot, 1999a).

In order to slow the spread of HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific, Piot (1999) suggests a multi-sectoral approach that encourages all sectors in society, both government and non-governmental organisations, to join the awareness and education campaigns. "The response must be multi-sectoral, multi-level and broadly supported. AIDS is not just a health sector issue, one for doctors and medicines. We need each sector to take on responsibility" (Piot, 1999b).

HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea

In December 1997, to mark World AIDS Day, the then Minister for Health, Ludger Mond, said in a speech that HIV/AIDS could devastate PNG unless drastic action was taken to reduce its spread in the country: " If control measures are not firmly established now, we could have between 15,000 to 20,000 persons infected with HIV by the year 2,000" (Mond, 1997). Referring to the HIV/AIDS situation in Uganda, Mr Mond said that the rampant spread of the disease crippled productivity and the economy in that country and the same pattern was likely to be repeated in PNG unless the disease was stopped. At the launch of the PNG National HIV/AIDS Medium Term Plan (1998-2002) in June 1998, the

then Prime Minister, Bill Skate, repeated the need for a determined response to the presence of HIV/AIDS in the country.

No leader can pretend that HIV/AIDS is not a problem in PNG. Many leaders did this around the world and realised too late the devastating effects of this disease. The worldwide epidemic has reached the shores of our young nation and is fast becoming a threat to the lives of many of our young people (Skate, 1998).

Repeated calls, however, for decisive action to counteract the increase of HIV infections in PNG seem to have fallen on deaf ears. Clement Malau, director of the PNG National AIDS Council Secretariat (which began operating in April 1999), is the official coordinator of HIV/AIDS activities and policies in PNG. Malau (1999) insists the massive epidemic of HIV/AIDS in many Sub-Saharan African countries such as Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe - where HIV infection rates are as high as 25 per cent in each of these countries - could be repeated in PNG.

Given the current situation in PNG, we could go the same way as many Sub-Saharan African countries; we've got a large sex industry and uncontrolled sexually transmitted infections; we've got a very young sexually active population and we've got to a certain extent denial in some provinces. So given that sort of setting, I think that it's not too much of an exaggerated statement to say that PNG could end up with extremely high infections rates as has happened in these Africa countries (Malau, 1999b).

Malau (1999) explains that PNG is already on the brink of a major HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The HIV/AIDS situation in PNG is very serious. We have all the settings for a major epidemic. Since colonisation, STDs have been rampant in PNG. IN 1987 we had one of the highest rates of sexually transmitted diseases in the world at 106 over 10,000 of population. And given that we have not been able to control STDs we cold be on the brink of a major catastrophe. Then we have the sex workers that move up and down the highways; we've got the sailors; we've got poverty and economic crisis where women are increasingly

selling sex for money. In some provinces husbands even encourage their wives to do sex for money. Then we've the movement of people from the rural to urban areas. Put all this together with the whole issue of ignorance and I would say that in 10 years we'll have a heavy burden of HIV/AIDS on our hands (Malau, 1999b).

Malau points to certain cultural obstacles which hamper delivery of information messages about HIV/AIDS. "PNG's population is made up of more than 700 different cultures who speak one third of the world's languages. Worldwide there are very few countries that have the same challenges we have in getting safe sex messages out into the community and changing long-held sexual beliefs and roles" (Malau 1999). Malau(1999) supports his argument with some examples.

One of the biggest challenges PNG faces in combating HIV/AIDS is confronting the traditional patriarchal structure of PNG society. A traditional 'big-man' attitude stemming from centuries of male dominated tribal society is still prevalent in many parts of the country. In tribal society a 'big man' would marry four or five wives who, for the most part, he was faithful to. But these days 'big men' include wealthy businessmen, bureaucrats or politicians who may be having sex with their wives, mistresses, sex workers, leaving everyone open to infection (Malau, 1999).

Recent research by the PNG Institute for Medical Research showed that 17 per cent of sex workers in Port Moresby are HIV positive. It also showed that a broad cross-section of society - from street vendors to the wealthy - have regular sex with prostitutes. More than 60 per cent of these men are married. Not surprisingly, increasing numbers of women are becoming infected. Moreover, in a society where polygamy is widespread and social problems such as domestic violence and incest are still largely unreported, there is little precedent for women to insist on safe sex. Furthermore, discussion of sex is not encouraged. Former PNG Health Minister, Peter Barter, mentioned how difficult it was to talk about sexually - related matters which were regarded as taboo topics.

I tried on several occasions to bring proposals before the cabinet for an AIDS council. But they didn't like to talk about it because it meant talking about sex. They don't like talking about anything connected to sex. They don't mind doing it but they don't want to talk about it (Barter, 1997).

The cultural obstacles placed upon reporting of a disease like HIV/AIDS in PNG were difficult for the author to assess because so few editors and journalists felt comfortable to acknowledge and discuss their presence and influence. Nevertheless it is a topic that deserves further research.

Despite the possible onslaught of a major HIV/AIDS epidemic, the government's response was slow and patchy. Although PNG's Department of Health set up a national AIDS surveillance committee in late 1987 and, in June 1988, developed a national policy document on AIDS control, it was not until December 1997 that the government agreed to the formation of a National AIDS Council. This began operating in April 1999. The author interviewed the former PNG Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan, in order to discover reasons for the delayed response to HIV/AIDS in PNG. "While I was in office (1994- 1997) we were concerned with malaria. It was the biggest killer and that was our immediate concern. AIDS was far down the ladder of priorities" (Chan, 1997). In the mid 1990's, Barter (1997) claimed the government was unaware of the potential economic and social disaster HIV/AIDS could unleash on the country. "Basically it wasn't a priority for the government. Sir Julius (Chan) told me before one cabinet meeting that he was not interested in the AIDS problem because for him larger numbers were suffering from malaria and diarrhoea" (Barter 1997).

Finally, throughout this thesis the author offers analysis on press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG in an attempt to understand what has

happened and what future improvements are possible. As Piot (1999) argues, the press has a vital role to play.

PNG is certain to experience a massive AIDS epidemic within the next decade if it does not respond quickly and effectively to the current crisis. In this context, the press have the potential to inform not only public opinion but especially politicians and future public policy. They can tell people about HIV/AIDS and ways to protect themselves. Basically, they are in a position to improve the understanding of HIV, to counteract stigma and discrimination. Their contribution is vital especially if the media helps eliminate stigma because this is the key to break the silence and to move the response forward (Piot, 1999b).

Conclusion

While HIV infection rates continue to decline in many parts of Western Europe and North America, there has been a significant increase in HIV/AIDS cases throughout Asia and the Pacific region. At the end of March 2000, PNG had 2,100 people living with HIV and 661 AIDS cases. This is more than the combined total of all South Pacific countries (Appendix 20). These figures are set to rise dramatically over the next decade. Some medical professionals from UNAIDS and in PNG predict that, without immediate and decisive intervention, PNG could face the same predicament as many Sub-Saharan African countries where in some countries such as Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, HIV/AIDS has infected up to 25 per cent of their respective populations. The disease came late to PNG and all sectors of PNG society have been called upon to meet the challenge of containing the increasing spread of HIV/AIDS within the country.

Since the discovery of HIV in 1981, the media around the world have played their part in disseminating important educational messages about HIV/AIDS. The next two chapters examine how the media, and the press in particular, reported HIV/AIDS in other countries.

This provides a means of comparison between PNG and other countries and allows for a closer examination of whether the press in PNG did in fact repeat the trends and mistakes of the Western press in its coverage of HIV/AIDS.

Chapter Five

Press coverage of HIV/AIDS in other countries.

The vast majority of research into media coverage of HIV/AIDS has centred on the news media in the United States and Britain. In the USA studies have been conducted by Baker (1986), Albert (1986), King (1990), Nelkin (1991), Clarke (1991) Rogers, Dearing and Chan (1991); and in Britain by Watney (1988), Wellings (1988), Berridge and Strong (1991), Beharrell (1993). Researchers in other countries who have investigated media portrayal of HIV/AIDS include: Herzlich and Pierret (1989); Cunningham (1989) in France: Lupton (1990, 1993, 1994,); Galvin and Pearson (1994) in Australia. Other forms of research focus on a comparative approach contrasting news coverage of AIDS in San Francisco and London (Temoshok, Grade and Zich (1989), Japan and the United States (Dearing 1992) and a number of European countries together (Grube and Boehme-Duerr, 1988). These studies provide us with broad patterns of reporting HIV/AIDS in the overseas media and enable us to discover common trends.

This chapter begins with Australia because it has the closest affinity with Papua New Guinea (PNG) in terms of geography, colonisation and commerce. The following section examines research on press coverage in Sub-Saharan Africa where there is a closer cultural proximity to PNG especially in the area of sexual taboos. The other sections examine the reporting of HIV/AIDS in Europe, North America and Asia, but in less detail, since the impact of these continents is not as immediate and influential on PNG when compared to Australia and Africa.

Throughout this chapter, the author highlights a consistent pattern to press coverage across the different continents. Three distinct phases

are identified. Firstly, early coverage of HIV/AIDS was disproportionately small considering the potential devastation HIV/AIDS could unleash on the social, economic and political life of each continent. This lack of urgency is partly explained by the actions of the media, and the press in particular, who confined HIV/AIDS to high-risk minority groups and which resulted in stereotyping people living with HIV/AIDS as belonging to such groups. Secondly, increased press coverage of HIV/AIDS occurred when the possibility of HIV infection through heterosexual sex was acknowledged. Often, this resulted in saturation coverage. Thirdly, complacency set in and HIV/AIDS was treated as just another routine health story. The author notes that the chronology and shape of press coverage of HIV/AIDS, particularly in the Western press, provides a classic example of what Downs(1972) called the 'issue-attention cycle': the rise, peak and decline in interest of a health issue. This concept was discussed in the Literature Review and this pattern (rise, peak and decline) follows a slightly different time period in some of the countries surveyed in this chapter.

The Australian Press

Australians, according to Phinney (1985), certainly influenced the PNG press since they trained local PNG editors and journalists just before and after independence. There is, however, no survey or research to determine whether PNG editors and journalists were influenced by coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Australian media. Despite these gaps in research, the proximity of these two countries together with substantial political, social and economic interaction, makes it likely that PNG editors were not unaware of media coverage of HIV/AIDS in Australia.

The Australian researcher, Lupton (1994), focused on how HIV/AIDS was presented in the Australian press and asserts the press played a key

role in constructing public understanding of the epidemic. Lupton (1994) adopts the social constructivist approach when describing the way HIV/AIDS was framed and described. Lupton (1994) narrows the chronology of press reporting on HIV/AIDS to three periods: a period in the early 1980s when HIV/AIDS was represented as a gay plague; a period late in the same decade when more apocalyptic imagery was used; and a final phase characterised by a growing 'routinisation' of the disease in media coverage.

Lupton (1994) describes how during a four-year period spanning the end of 1981 to the end of 1985, certain discourses and a defined AIDS lexicon developed in the Australian news coverage of HIV/AIDS, similar in many respects to those in other Western nations: The vilification of homosexuality; the drawing of distinctions between innocent and guilty people with HIV/AIDS; the panic over casual contagion; the interest in famous people who had developed HIV/AIDS; the denial of risk to the general population; and the metaphors associated with plague, death and divine retribution. All were evident in Australian press accounts of HIV/AIDS during the initial phase of news coverage (Lupton, 1994: 49).

The researcher shows, however, that in 1987 there was a dramatic change. Initial press reports on HIV/AIDS as a 'gay plague' coupled with a tangible complacency about the threat posed to heterosexuals moved quickly to panic statements about possible apocalyptic effects the epidemic could have on the entire population. In 1987, the 'Grim Reaper' education campaign to promote HIV/AIDS awareness was strongly supported by the popular press and received extensive free publicity. Up until then, HIV/AIDS was commonly seen as someone else's problem and confined to the gay and drug world. But by 1987, the possibility of heterosexual transmission was officially recognised by governments of the developed world. The potential for widespread

infection galvanised the Australian government and media into action. The 'Grim Reaper' period of reporting was marked by its insistence that HIV/AIDS was not a gay disease but a disease affecting everyone (Lupton, 1993a: 316). Yet, this portrayal of HIV/AIDS as a disease relevant to everybody was short-lived.

By the end of the 1980s, the disease had entered the third phase and gradually became 'routinized' in press reports. This last phase was highlighted by Lupton, Chapman and Wong (1993b). With the use of quantitative and qualitative assessment of rhetoric in press accounts of HIV/AIDS, they analysed 2,795 articles in 20 Australian metropolitan newspapers from March to September 1990. Findings from the seven-month research show that HIV/AIDS was no longer regarded as a 'gay plague'. In explaining the reason for this, Lupton refers to the rules for judging newsworthiness. "The imperative for 'new' news to entertain the audience had an effect upon the press coverage of the epidemic. Gay men are no longer newsworthy because their story is now old news" (Lupton et al., 1993b: 16). The continuing loss of life among homosexual men in Australia received little prominence. Some researchers, as discussed in the Literature Review, wondered whether the press in Australia had a deliberate homophobic bias.

By 1990, the threat of heterosexuals being at risk from HIV infection had lost its newsworthiness. "AIDS was not predominantly portrayed either as a disease affecting heterosexuals or the general population as it was in 1987-88" (Lupton et al., 1993b:15). Instead, given their comparative rarity, children with HIV/AIDS dominated attention and the notion of 'innocent' versus 'guilty' victim still prevailed.

The content category which received most press attention concerned people living with HIV/AIDS, especially children, which accounted for 26 per cent of the total number of articles. In contrast,

homosexual men received decidedly unsympathetic attention with only two per cent of the total. "This is a telling indication of whom the press considers worthy to mourn, which in turn helps to determine the audience's ratings of whom in society are considered worthy" (Lupton et al., 1993b: 10).

Despite the enormity of the HIV/AIDS problem in sub-Saharan countries, only a few articles appeared in the Australian press on this topic. Lupton et al., (1993b) suggest one possible reason: Africa was not considered an 'elite' region and was far removed from Australians. The researchers record that 70 per cent of all items on HIV/AIDS were in an Australian context and only two per cent of articles examined the disease in other countries (Lupton et al., 1993b: 8).

Generally, articles analysed by Lupton et al., (1993b) tended to promote the view that the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Australia was less of a problem than earlier predictions had warned. The researchers stress that the change in focus from concern about HIV/AIDS in the first research (1986-1988) to an attitude of complacency prevalent in the second study (1990) could underline the level of support in the community for continued efforts to fight the epidemic.

If the press in Australia does not see AIDS in Australia as an important and newsworthy issue and does not support government sponsored campaigns, then the interest and support of the general community may well flag. Apathy and complacency may overcome the concerns about HIV/AIDS, first engendered by the shock antics of the 'Grim Reaper' campaign. Continuing efforts to maintain high levels of awareness of the general public may be thwarted (Lupton et al., 1993b: 16).

Lupton (1994) notes that Improvements have occurred in press reports especially with the normalisation of HIV/AIDS as a news story. She points to a 'toning down' of reporting, with less sensationalism, less emphasis on sexual preferences and the inclusion of more people living

with HIV/AIDS. The use of specialist reporters with expert knowledge was another noticeable development.

Galvin and Pearson (1994) analysed news coverage of HIV/AIDS in Australia and were highly critical of the mainstream press. For them, it exhibited:

An over-reliance on news agency copy, a tendency to confuse medical research with individual doctors' opinion, a deference to doctors as the primary authorities in health related matters, an unqualified acceptance of theory findings and a reluctance to provide readers with background material so that they could gauge the veracity of research findings (Galvin and Pearson, 1994: 109).

These two researchers strongly encourage the use of trained medical reporters and claim that a high standard of professionalism and credibility can be reached only if the journalists understand the scientific process and adapt the information to the news format with as little loss of precision as possible (Galvin and Pearson, 1994: 120). This view is supported by Miller and Williams (1993) who see specialist reporters as having a much more committed view of their role and who recognise that what they write may affect their readers (Miller and Williams, 1993: 135).

Press Coverage of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa

This section examines two surveys carried out in Zimbabwe and Zambia. The researchers include Pitts and Jackson (1993) who examined newspaper coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Zimbabwean press from 1987-1991 and Kasoma (1990, 1995) who analysed the same topic in the Zambian press in 1990 and 1994. Some of the obstacles encountered by journalists in these two African countries when reporting on HIV/AIDS in their respective countries were also common to the situation in PNG. As

this thesis highlights in later chapters, denial of the problem together with cultural taboos were prominent difficulties when reporting on HIV/AIDS.

One of the earliest surveys on press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa was carried out by Pitts and Jackson (1993) who used four newspapers for their content analysis of the press in Zimbabwe: two national dailies, The Herald (circulation: 130,000) and The Bulawayo Chronicle (circulation: 67,000), and two Sunday papers, The Sunday Mail (circulation: 132,000) and The Sunday News (circulation: 66,000). The survey recorded the number of HIV/AIDS news stories by the national newspapers in Zimbabwe over a five-year period from 1987-1991 and assessed frequency of topics mentioned in the stories. The findings of the survey revealed that the HIV/AIDS epidemic began with small numbers and then spread rapidly.

The first cases of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe were seen in 1983 but the extent of the underlying problem was recognised only in 1985 with the routine screening of donated blood. In 1986, there were only eight confirmed HIV/AIDS cases which had risen to more than 10,500 cases in 1991 (Pitts and Jackson, 1993: 224). Although the early years of the epidemic were characterised by some reluctance to officially acknowledge the extent of the problem, the government had, by 1991, started to place increasing emphasis on the importance of the issue.

Prior to 1987, there had been little reference to the disease in the press. During the five-year study (1987-1991), 1008 cuttings were obtained and labelled as an article, an editorial, a letter, a major personal viewpoint article, a cartoon or an advertisement. The cuttings on HIV/AIDS increased dramatically over the five-year period from (115) in 1987 to (154) in 1988, (221) in 1989, (282) in 1990 and (236) in 1991. The increase in coverage was matched by a dramatic upsurge in column

inches, from 17,935cm in 1987 to 42, 217cm in 1991. The majority of cuttings were articles (76 per cent) and letters (10 per cent).

The cuttings were then divided into several categories: statistics; the search for a cure or vaccine; prevention; education and awareness; transmission and risk; counselling and care; policy; economics and personal portrayals. During the five-year survey, education and awareness stories topped the list of categories with a total of 119 out of 169 cuttings in 1991. That was followed by policy and economic (32), statistics (13), counselling (9). Only five cuttings portrayed personal accounts (Pitts and Jackson 1993: 227). While more emphasis was placed on local stories there were few stories on paediatric AIDS or on orphans. Figures for deaths were seldom mentioned. "This remains a gross under-estimate of the scale of the problem since in 1991 AIDS had become the commonest form of death in major hospitals in Zimbabwe" (Pitts and Jackson, 1993: 228).

An analysis of the language used in the stories shows the distinction between HIV and AIDS was not clearly understood and the description of people living with HIV/AIDS reflected the type of terminology used elsewhere by the press in Europe, North America and Australia. 'AIDS victims' was the most common reference in headline stories (25 occurrences). Metaphors were frequently used in Zimbabwean press. Military metaphors, similar to those outlined by Sontag (1989), were preferred such as 'AIDS fight', 'AIDS war', 'AIDS time bomb', 'AIDS purge'. Other metaphors associated with HIV/AIDS were 'nightmare', 'plague', 'menace' and 'powder keg' (Pitts and Jackson ,1993: 228).

In chapter 7 on press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG, it is seen that similar metaphors were used by the PNG press with 'AIDS Victims', 'AIDS time bomb' and 'AIDS fight' the most commonly used. The continual use of such negative descriptions, argue Pitts and Jackson, does little to

convince people “that there is hope, that there is a possibility of living and coping with a diagnosis of HIV” (Pitts and Jackson, 1993: 223). The researchers believe the lack of personal portrayals remains a hindrance to educating the public because “the lack of local role models does little to convince people that AIDS is part of their lives and a dilemma for them personally” (Pitts and Jackson, 1993: 229). The inability to put a human face on HIV/AIDS still remains a problem and challenge to newspaper editors in PNG.

The researchers suggest several areas for improving press coverage of HIV/AIDS in The Zimbabwean: a greater focus on local concerns and how people and families live and cope with HIV/AIDS; avoidance of stigmatising language and the adoption of more positive metaphors and terminology. Looking to the future, Pitts and Jackson (1993), encourage the press to take more seriously their potential role for providing information and education so as to empower people to face HIV/AIDS constructively (Pitts and Jackson, 1993: 230).

Press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Zambia.

Kasoma (1990) completed two surveys of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Zambian press. The first study (1990) involved a content analysis of all articles printed during 1986 and 1989 in two of Zambia's daily newspapers, The Times of Zambia and the Zambia Daily Mail. The years were chosen deliberately: 1986 was when the government first recognised the presence of HIV/AIDS in the country and by 1989, it was assumed that HIV/AIDS had become well known to Zambians, or at least to the readers of the two newspapers (Kasoma,1990:49). Kasoma selected six categories for content analysis: front page, local and foreign stories; editorials, features and letters to the editor. These variables,

argues Kasoma (1990), can determine the intention of the editors and the impact they want a newspaper article to have on its readers.

This approach to content analysis had been adopted before by Wilkins and Patterson (1987) who stated that the number of stories is not the only indication of the importance of a particular news event. Kasoma's (1990) main hypothesis was that as a new disease without a cure threatening to kill large numbers of Zambians, HIV/AIDS deserved the maximum publicity in the Zambian press both in terms of frequency and information about how it was acquired and how it could be prevented. The researcher's hypothesis about the necessity for extensive coverage in the face of a potentially deadly epidemic did not match the results of the survey.

There is overwhelming evidence that the two newspapers did not regard AIDS with the importance it deserved as a killer disease with the potential to wipe out the entire population. Only two per cent of the AIDS news stories were used on page one, nearly all of them placed low on the page and not as leads. Only eight per cent of the AIDS news stories featured as leads in any of the two newspaper stories (Kasoma, 1990: 51).

The survey revealed that initial coverage of HIV/AIDS relied heavily on overseas news and created an imbalance between foreign and local stories. In 1986, 60 per cent of all news stories published in the two dailies were foreign and 40 per cent were local. By 1989, however, the frequency of local stories nearly matched foreign ones: foreign, 52 per cent; local, 48 per cent. In PNG, foreign stories were often the main source of news until the mid 1990s when greater emphasis was placed on local stories. Kasoma puts forward his own explanation for the over-emphasis on foreign stories: "In 1986 HIV/AIDS was new to the country and there were more reports from outside than could be generated locally. The second reason could have been a deliberate attempt by

the two newspapers to show that HIV/AIDS was 'out there' and 'not so much here' (Kasoma, 1990: 51).

The findings of Kasoma's survey disagree with the position taken by Singer and Endreny (1987) and Wilkins and Patterson (1987) who claim that the media report only the harmful effects of HIV infection rather than explain ways to prevent its spread. "In this study the converse has been true, namely that risk was the more dominant issue in the AIDS news reports" (Kasoma, 1990: 56).

Kasoma(1990) had hoped to find more news stories on 'mobilising information' (MI) in the Zambian press. The concept of MI, discussed in the Literature Review, is supported by Kristiansen and Harding (1984), especially after their research on the mobilisation of health behaviour by the press in Britain. These two researchers argue that little MI appeared in health articles and this affected the impact of the message. "The literature in which health threats are vividly depicted shows that such communications are more likely to promote a given behaviour when specific details about actions, which will counteract or prevent the health threats, are explicitly and precisely described" (Kristiansen and Harding, 1984: 365). The inability or hesitancy on the part of the press to include MI is explained by Lemert (1984) who believes the press finds MI dull and its details expendable. "Editors prefer to focus on the issue rather than facilitate public participation" (Lemert, 1984: 245). Kasoma is, however, convinced the press in Zambia should provide more MI which, according to the researcher, enables readers to react to the spread of the disease instead of just receiving information for the sake of information (Kasoma, 1990: 58).

The overall conclusion of Kasoma's first survey on Zambian press coverage of HIV/AIDS was highly critical of the lack of urgency found among Zambian editors: "The Zambian press has approached the AIDS

crisis in a rather lackadaisical manner, treating it as any other crisis instead of regarding it as a crisis and a real threat to Zambia" (Kasoma, 1990: 59). The argument that the press is better at covering 'an event' rather than 'a process' was borne out in Kasoma's survey when the two Zambian dailies frequently treated HIV/AIDS as a single story without providing any background or continuity.

The mistake the newspapers made was to consider single articles on AIDS in isolation. They need to follow an inter-textual approach. In the end, articles usually originated from daily events and described health issues superficially (Kasoma, 1990: 57).

In his second survey, Kasoma studied HIV/AIDS stories in four Zambian dailies throughout 1993. The newspapers included: The Times of Zambia, The Zambia Daily Mail, The Post and The Mirror. The content analysis was extended to take into account whether the story was truthful; whether it added new information; whether it concentrated on harm or risk; and how many stories concentrated on the possibility of a cure or people living and dying with HIV/AIDS (Kasoma, 1995: 11).

The research revealed that seven years after the first HIV cases were discovered in Zambia, there were hardly any editorials in any of the newspapers, a fact that Kasoma interpreted "as a sign that none of newspapers surveyed regarded HIV/AIDS as a sufficiently important subject to report" (Kasoma, 1995: 13). The failure to editorialise on the issue, argues Kasoma, meant the press missed an opportunity to lead debate on the topic (Kasoma 1995: 29). A similar situation existed in PNG where the leading daily newspaper, the Post-Courier, wrote its first editorial on HIV/AIDS in 1997, ten years after the first case was discovered. Wilkins and Patterson (1987) offer a possible explanation by suggesting that when a crisis becomes as widespread as the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic, a pattern develops in which the unexpected becomes the expected and its news value is diminished with the result

that fewer news reports and editorials are published (Wilkins and Patterson, 1987: 591). Kasoma's 1993 survey did show a definite shift in all the Zambian dailies to local stories and an improvement in publishing information particularly in regard to mobilising information, especially prevention (46 per cent), harm (18 per cent) and risks (22 per cent) (Kasoma, 1990: 50).

Zambian journalist, Oliver Kanene, is also critical of the country's press for its negative reporting of HIV/AIDS. The journalist criticises the presentation of the epidemic as a problem in other countries and the common practice of sensationalist reporting which, Kanene argues, only increases stigmatisation and discrimination among the general population (Kanene, 1994: 44). It became apparent to Kanene that discrimination against people who were infected with HIV/AIDS resulted from labelling HIV/AIDS as a shameful disease. Kanene insists that newspaper readers were misinformed and fed damaging rumours.

In fact I am sure some of the press stories which carried misleading messages were responsible for the reactions which led to people refusing to care for their sick family members (Kanene, 1994: 45).

Political factors

In the early years of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, most African governments and media continued to virtually ignore the crisis. Many avoided reference to it altogether and attributed the cause of the death to anything but HIV/AIDS. Gibson (1994) argues that a major obstacle with press coverage of HIV/AIDS during the early stages of the epidemic was the number of government-controlled media who prevented an adequate and comprehensive approach to reporting on HIV/AIDS. "Many African governments maintain relatively close, often repressive relationships to the media" (Gibson, 1994: 354). The situation in

Zimbabwe, according to Gibson (1994), provides a typical example of government interference:

The media in Zimbabwe may be the engine of the train that drives coverage and influences audiences but the government is the engineer deciding which track to take and when (Gibson, 1994: 355).

In regard to HIV/AIDS coverage, the government-owned newspaper in Zimbabwe, The Herald, decided to delay its coverage:

Control over its editorial coverage and content is possible and as a result, the newspaper generally reflects government policy which until 1991 was 'aggressively silent' on HIV/AIDS (Matimba, 1991).

A breakthrough in press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe occurred when David Mankaba, a well known bass guitarist with the Bhundi Boys band, used the media to tell his story about living with AIDS. He destroyed many myths. When he died in 1991, it was the first time the Zimbabwean media had recognised AIDS as the cause of death. According to Gibson, even the President, Robert Mugabe, persists in perpetuating myth and misinformation by painting homosexuals as the chief culprits in the spread of the disease (Gibson, 1994: 352).

Tourism and development are two key factors that often lurk behind government inaction over HIV/AIDS. Gibson (1994) notes that many African governments 'exhibit a high degree of sensitivity about HIV/AIDS publicity which in their view could severely harm their economies by hurting tourism and development (Gibson, 1994: 355). In Kenya, tourism was one area where the government actively discouraged stories or news items about the HIV/AIDS situation (Reid 1988). Tourism had been Kenya's second largest revenue earner with 450,000 tourists each year. Kenya's initial reaction to HIV/AIDS, one of denial and suppression, was based on fear of losing tourism revenue. Preventive measures were slow to be introduced and in the absence of

information, fear fed on rumours and misconceptions (Reid, 1988: 26). Despite government pressure to suppress HIV/AIDS stories in the early stages of the epidemic, the Kenyan media were accused of sensational reporting and placing too much emphasis on death and frightening statistics designed to sell newspapers rather than increase public knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS (Nzioka, 1994: 165).

Levels of HIV/AIDS awareness, however, increased dramatically in Kenya from very low levels in 1985 to well over 90 per cent of the population in 1992 (Nzioka, 1994: 164). But these figures reveal little about changes in sexual behaviour and the adoption of safer sex practices, and point to the limitations of media information to effect changes in attitudes and behaviour (Nzioka, 1994: 164). This view is supported by Wilton and Aggleton.

Information by itself is not sufficient to bring about behavioural change: individuals do not simply absorb information and respond logically, by modifying their health-related behaviour. Rather people actively make sense of new ideas they encounter by assessing them in the light of pre-existing beliefs, interpreting them accordingly, and fitting them in with what they already know (Wilton and Aggleton, 1991: 149).

Cultural factors

Government-owned newspapers in Africa were not the only barriers to press coverage of the impending HIV/AIDS epidemic. Latham (1993) argues that the most prominent obstacle to prevention of AIDS in Africa is widespread "fatalism." "Poor African people have little control over events in their lives. It may be soothing then to accept adversity by saying 'this is the will of God'" (Latham, 1993: 45). And God, according to Cullen (1991), in whatever way he is believed or described, is an important influence in people's lives throughout Africa: "Many people

speak about AIDS as a punishment from God and as one believer put it: who can go against God ?" (Cullen 1991b:1504).

Despite the enormity of the problem in Africa, Reid (1988) notes that there was little of the hysteria that was seen in Australia. This suggested that the problem was seen as beyond their control (Reid, 1988 :15). Cullen (1991) points to the harsh living conditions in many rural and urban areas in Africa which create a sense of helplessness and a lack of desire to protest or complain about HIV/AIDS.

People live from day to day. It is hard to interest them in some action today that could affect their lives in five to ten years. Where the next meal is coming from is more important. The fear of death is not to them such a deterrent for in the villages death is a part of everyday life and experience (Cullen, 1991b,1504).

Cullen (1991) adds that in many African countries the low status of women provides a classic example of the cultural difficulties that prevent resistance to possible HIV infection.

It seems that many women have little control over their own lives and the health of their future babies. It is hard for them to take a stand and the less bargaining power a woman has, the harder it is to avoid taking risks (Cullen, 1991b: 1504).

Information about HIV/AIDS has to compete with ingrained cultural practices. Women are extremely vulnerable.

It is possible for a woman to suffer triple jeopardy; she may become infected herself; she may pass the infection to her baby in the womb; because women are the main carers for the sick, she carries the burden if someone close to her dies. This brings both fear and guilt. Anxiety increases when she falls sick and worries about who will look after the household or how to keep a part time job(Cullen, 1992: 389).

Kanene (1994) was one of the first to openly acknowledge that certain cultural taboos hampered Zambian journalists. The expression

'sexual intercourse' was regarded as unprintable while it was difficult to challenge the information given by political leaders or elders which was often incorrect. As happened in other African countries, the story of HIV/AIDS in Zambia needed a human face. The breakthrough came in 1991 when Winstone Zulu, not a prominent or well known person, shared through the press and on national television, his experience of living with HIV (Kanene, 1994: 47).

Other obstacles to press coverage of HIV/AIDS in African countries included the fact that the general public were not up in arms over the crisis; press reporting could be seen as interference in a private and personal matter; only fragile data existed on the extent of HIV/AIDS infection rates; there was a tendency to look at immediate needs rather than at a virus which could develop into AIDS in ten years; without a cure there was no point in creating further hopelessness; matters related to sexual behaviour were rarely discussed in public because sex was still a taboo subject; the connection of HIV/AIDS to sex runs the risk of linking people with HIV/AIDS to illicit sex (Caldwell and Orubuloye, 1992: 1170).

Because of the low readership in many African countries, a new form of media has developed. It is called 'amedia', and is a method of interpersonal communication using drama, dance and song, aimed at such social groups as the women's market association and various other union groups (Caldwell et al., 1992: 1179). The main aim is to educate grassroots people about HIV/AIDS and combat the myths surrounding HIV/AIDS. A few similar media groups can be found in PNG where 48 per cent of the population are illiterate (WHO: 1996). The groups have the potential for imparting knowledge in an immediate and effective manner.

There was resentment in Africa's scientific and media circles about focus in the Western media on the possible African origins of HIV/AIDS

(Chirimuuta, 1989: 165). Speculation about the African origins of HIV/AIDS brought an influx of scientists trying to prove the theory.

Many Africans strongly resented this emphasis and sensationalised reports in the Western media had unfortunate results, one of which was that the motives of foreign researchers were viewed with extreme suspicion (Lyons, 1993: 137).

By the mid 1990s, most African governments had implemented aggressive public health campaigns, many of them through government-controlled media. While disagreement continued as to whether rates of HIV infection were over-estimated or under-stated in Africa (Yeager, 1988; Boulton and Singer, 1992), there was wide agreement on the threat of HIV/AIDS to cripple African economies and social structures (Yeager, 1988). By 1998, HIV/AIDS had overtaken malaria as the largest killer in Africa recording over two million deaths (UNAIDS: 1999b).

Press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Europe:

The British Press:

Initial analysis of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Britain examined the negative character of media representations which demonised HIV/AIDS and stigmatised those with the virus. Sensationalism and widespread misinformation about the transmission of HIV/AIDS were frequently evident (Albert, 1986; Altman, 1986; Watney, 1987; Wellings, 1988). According to Wellings (1988), these issues continue to be of major importance in the analysis of the media. The earliest representations of HIV/AIDS in the British press described HIV/AIDS as a 'plague' or as a 'gay plague', suggesting a strong link between HIV/AIDS and unresolved fears about sexuality and social order (Porter, 1986; Watney, 1987; Alcorn, 1988; Sontag, 1989). Another researcher, Beharrell (1993), is highly critical of the British press for its early reports on

HIV/AIDS which presented the disease as only a problem for “gays, junkies and foreigners” (Beharrell, 1993: 215). This ignored heterosexually contracted HIV infections elsewhere in the world.

For example in Uganda and Kenya, [HIV/AIDS] epidemics developed first among young heterosexuals in urban centres. But such knowledge has little impact on deep-seated anti-gay and racist prejudice which preferred to see the disease as evidence of inherent corruption, immorality and guilt (Beharrell, 1993: 215).

Beharrell (1993), however, does recognise that after 1986 when the possibility of heterosexual transmission was established, press coverage became less biased and polarised and notes that a diversity of perspectives surfaced in the news media. They were linked to the government's development strategy on AIDS, particularly its health education campaign. The researcher lists the emergence of three distinct perspectives: the promotion of safer sex, targeting risk behaviours, and presenting HIV/AIDS as a challenge to a wide range of current social orthodoxies (Beharrell, 1993: 211).

Meanwhile, Berridge and Strong (1991) outlined four distinct stages of press coverage in Britain which paralleled government policy development on HIV/AIDS. Firstly, the ‘gay plague’ which lasted from 1981 to 1983 and highlighted mainly homosexual transmission of the HIV virus. Secondly, there was a period when the origins of HIV/AIDS became an important news story. Thirdly, the press began to play a key role in the period of national emergency in Britain (1986-87). It was at this stage that the role of television became significant. Fourthly, the ‘routinisation’ and ‘normalisation’ of HIV/AIDS when the disease was treated as just another regular health story. A similar pattern of press coverage emerged in North American, Europe and Australia.

Other researchers such as Temoshok, Grade and Zich (1989) surveyed several London and San Francisco newspapers in 1985 and

highlighted the difficulty of talking about sexuality in the British press. The survey showed how London newspapers “were not informative about specific sexual practices that were either ‘safe’ or ‘unsafe’ in terms of contracting HIV/AIDS” (Temoshok et al. , 1989: 547).

Wellings (1988) concluded his research by declaring the British national newspaper coverage had both created and reinforced misunderstandings about HIV/AIDS by being “far from accurate in its identification of the causes of HIV/AIDS, the scale of the epidemic, the groups most affected by it and the means by which the disease is transmitted” (Wellings, 1988: 103). Media misinformation in Britain was also viewed by Aggleton and Homans (1989) as having a negative influence on lay perceptions of HIV/AIDS, encouraging people “to misperceive the risks associated with particular kinds of behaviour by suggesting, for example, that AIDS affects certain groups rather than being associated with particular behaviours” (Aggleton and Homans, 1989: 56). A future challenge for the British press concerns promoting responsible images of HIV/AIDS.

By portraying persons with AIDS as human beings, often admirable and courageous ones with families, jobs, hopes, fears and dreams, the news media can help change some of the unfortunate attitudes borne of prejudice and fear (Tomoshok et al. , 1990: 549).

Like other Western countries, the press in Britain has ‘toned down’ its coverage in terms of frequency. This could be linked to the chronology of press coverage and to what Downs (1972) has called the ‘issue attention cycle’. This concept was discussed in the Literature Review and can be summarised as the rise, peak and decline of a news event. Miller and Williams (1993), in an analysis of the US press coverage, found a similar pattern over a slightly different period.

The French Press

Herzlich and Pierret (1989) conducted an analysis of HIV/AIDS in six national French daily newspapers from 1982-86. They pinpointed four key phases in press coverage that amounted to the construction of HIV/AIDS as a social phenomenon. These included: naming; comparisons with past epidemics; popularisation of medical knowledge together with competition over claims of discoveries; and discourses about the 'other' with particular reference to homosexuals (Herzlich and Pierret, 1989: 1235).

The first stage, naming this mysterious illness, resulted in such labels as: 'homosexual cancer', 'gay cancer', 'the homosexual syndrome' and 'homosexual pneumonia'. The second phase centred on the viral origins of AIDS and discovery of the virus that probably caused AIDS. Despite the continuing disputes among scientists, the press slowly shifted HIV/AIDS from the realms of medical mystery to an issue of growing public concern about possible contagion. The French dailies relayed the advice of physicians and suggested French homosexuals modify their sexual practices (Herzlich and Pierret, 1989: 1239). Meanwhile, the need to fight the disease developed into a fight against groups holding different moral positions.

During each particular phase, a concept or fact related to progress in medical sciences served as a basis for attempts to make meaning out of this new mysterious disease. By 1986, HIV/AIDS, regardless of subsequent developments, had a fixed place in public social life. Its boundaries had been set: a mysterious disease related to deviant behaviour and found predominantly in homosexuals (Herzlich and Pierret, 1989: 1236). Despite the emergence of possible heterosexual

transmission in 1986, early impressions of HIV/AIDS as a 'gay plague' remained the most lasting because of fear of transmission and dislike of groups such as homosexuals and drug users.

Press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the United States .

Rogers, Dearing and Chan, (1991) provide an overall view of media coverage of HIV/AIDS in the United States. The researchers identify four distinct phases; the 'initial era' with little media attention paid to the disease; the 'science era' focusing on reports of transmission by casual contact; the 'human era' with saturation coverage of public people like Rock Hudson; and the 'political era' highlighting testing and privacy issues. At first the press was extremely slow to publish reports on HIV/AIDS. Except for the gay press, and the San Francisco Chronicle, few newspapers published articles until May 1983. During this month the New York Times, in an attempt to cushion mounting criticisms of their failure to report on an HIV/AIDS benefit at Madison Square Gardens, attended by 18,000 people, published 21 articles in May 1983 compared to one the previous month (Nelkin, 1991b: 297).

Initially defined as a homosexual disease, HIV/AIDS attracted little public attention. In fact the rise and fall of media interest in America had little to do with the degree of crisis or with scientific advances. In the beginning HIV/AIDS affected social outcasts, most notably gays. Editors, who gave reasons for not covering the HIV/AIDS story, stated that the news about homosexuals would not interest the great majority of "family newspaper readers" (Kinsella, 1989: 2). Kinsella is highly critical of American journalism's handling of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

The AIDS story has challenged the ground rules of American journalism and forced reporters to acknowledge that their treatment of news, far from being objective, is often shaped by

their personal prejudices and assumptions about their audience (Kinsella, 1989: 1).

The researcher was scathing about those journalists who refused to believe that the deaths of gay men and drug addicts were worth reporting (Kinsella, 1989: 2).

Shilts (1987) is critical of the long delay it took to mobilise an adequate response to the disease.

From 1980, when the first isolated gay men began falling ill from strange and exotic ailments, nearly five years passed before all these institutions - medicine, public health, the federal and private scientific research establishments, the mass media and the gay community's leadership - mobilised the way they should in a time of threat. The story of these first five years of AIDS in America is a drama of national failure, played out against the backdrop of needless death (Shilts, 1987: xxii).

Shilts (1987) targets the mass media in particular and claims that while people died, nobody paid attention because "the mass media did not like covering stories about homosexuals and was especially skittish about stories that involved gay sexuality. Newspapers and television largely avoided discussion of the disease until the death toll was too high" (Shilts, 1987: xxii).

Nelkin, Willis and Parris (1991) were equally critical of the mainstream press which they claim had "ghettoised and individualised the disease by defining it as only a problem of those engaged in a particular lifestyle (Nelkin et al. , 1991a: 233). Nelkin (1991) claims that the moral tone of initial news coverage with its focus on high risk groups, helped to stigmatise those with HIV/AIDS. This may have been prompted by the sexual conservatism of the media, reflected in its efforts to avoid alienating its broad readership (Nelkin, 1991b: 299). Another factor which created negativity towards those with HIV/AIDS was the way the press

labelled HIV/AIDS as a sexually transmitted disease (STD) such as syphilis instead of a viral disease like hepatitis. The concept of STD clearly laid the blame on immorality (Nelkin, 1991b: 299).

As soon as proof was available to show that HIV/AIDS would extend beyond the gay community, coverage of the disease expanded. This was evident in the summer of 1985 with the illness and death of film star Rock Hudson. Whereas in June 1985, The New York Times carried only four articles on HIV/AIDS, it published (16) in July, (46) in August and (72) in September (Nelkin, 1991b: 298). Despite the expansion of coverage after 1985, gaps in reporting have been significant. For example political activism among gays attracted more coverage than the problem of HIV/AIDS among women, especially coloured women (Treichler (1987). Nelkin agrees that the needs of certain groups were sidelined.

Journalists, ideally an independent voice, so called fourth estate, provided little critical analysis that might have called attention to the growing number of intravenous drug users and women with AIDS (Nelkin, 1991b: 299).

Nelkin (1991b) reveals a deeper inconsistency on the part of the news media, which she argues, resulted in the polarisation of content in the late 1980s.

On the one hand sensational stories and headlines warned of everyone's vulnerability. Headlines spoke of 'deadly new epidemic' and the 'public health threat of the century.' On the other hand many reports reassured the public by framing HIV/AIDS in terms of high risk groups, framing HIV/AIDS as a disease for 'others', namely gays, drug users, Africans, Haitians, and those who are somehow immoral (Nelkin, 1991b: 300).

Nelkin (1991b) contends that isolating particular risk groups was also linked to the concept of "blame" which surfaced as a pervasive theme in media coverage in the mid 1980s.

While searching for a cause and an explanation of the disease, the media lapsed into the language of reprobation, censure and rebuke. Blame for the disease was attributed to dangerous lifestyles, immoral behaviour and illegal drug use. Media quickly labelled AIDS an African or Haitian disease (Nelkin, 1991b: 299).

American media messages changed over time. By 1990, as happened elsewhere in Britain, France and Australia, the 'routinisation' of the disease coincided with a 'toning down' of the moral and stereotyping content found in early reports on HIV/AIDS. This has been replaced with more positive images and language on HIV/AIDS. A major focus now is the scientific progress towards a vaccine and a possible cure.

Reporting HIV/AIDS in Asia

Criticism of media coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Asia region surfaced in a United Nations report on The Fourth International Congress on HIV/AIDS in Asia held in Manila in 1997. It listed several criticisms: the media had relied too heavily on 'event-orientated' rather than 'process-orientated' stories; the media over-emphasised people dying with HIV; the media tended to stereotype and even to 'hound' people living with HIV; and voices for HIV advocacy were easily drowned out by more lucrative commercial interests (UNDP, 1998: 68). The report urged the media to review its role of impartial observer and think about taking a more active educational role.

Wolffers (1997) criticises the media's negative reporting of HIV/AIDS especially in southeast Asia at the beginning of the pandemic, and highlights how the discrimination of minority groups in the west, mainly gays and drug users, was reflected in the Asian media.

The status of injecting drug users and sex workers in southeast Asia, who were among the first to become infected with the HIV virus, is

virtually the lowest in society and most of the people in the media look down on them or are indifferent to their needs. This is one of the reasons for the unsympathetic attitude towards HIV-infected people and people with AIDS and has become a serious block to writing positively about HIV (Wolffers, 1997: 52).

The result is that the media play a negative role by blaming certain groups in society, by not respecting people's privacy, and by misinforming people about the dynamics of HIV/AIDS (Wolffers, 1997: 54). While Wolffers (1997) concedes that the media have informed people about the existence of HIV/AIDS, the use of fear-based tactics instead of distributing information in order to contextualise the situation has intensified the sense of fear and discrimination among people (Wolffers, 1997: 53).

Meanwhile HIV/AIDS is spreading rapidly throughout Asia. Linge and Porter (1998) reveal the enormity of the epidemic.

Within a decade the disease will reach proportions that will dwarf the epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa, which has until now been the focus of world attention. In 1988, it could be said that although HIV was certainly present in Asia, it had not yet taken hold even in major risk groups. But by the end of 1995, the World Health Organisation (WHO) was estimating a massive increase with up to 3.7 million HIV positive children and adults and 300,000 more who were living with AIDS (Linge and Porter, 1998: 14).

Non-government organisations (NGOs) and health workers on the ground believe the real figures to be considerably higher because people remain unaware that they are HIV positive or hide such knowledge to avoid the stigma and alienation associated with it (Linge and Porter, 1998: 15).

Linge and Porter (1998) do admit that there is still considerable uncertainty about the exact extent, course and impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Asia. They argue that this is primarily due to under-diagnosis

which subsequently results in under-reporting. Other factors that prevent a more accurate assessment of the extent of HIV/AIDS infection levels include the high variation in the probability of transmission per sexual act; a long and variable period of clinical latency; and a limited knowledge of the political, social and economic consequences of the disease (Linge and Porter, 1998: 33).

The extended period between infection and death makes it harder, argue Linge and Porter, to persuade governments, communities and individuals to confront a problem now that will only appear at some time in the future (Linge and Porter, 1998: 6). Other researchers such as Brown and Xenos (1994) also highlight the hidden nature of the epidemic, caused, they say, by the low numbers of early HIV/AIDS cases and the social invisibility of the behaviours that spread it. This makes it difficult to convince policy makers and the media that a problem exists and to persuade them to act (Brown and Xenos, 1994: 16).

The challenge facing the media in Asia was summarised as early as 1989 by Barcelona (1989), whose report on the Manila regional workshop for Asia and the Pacific concerning the role of the media in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, revealed a high degree of inaction. The report pointed out that the media's initial response to HIV/AIDS in Asia was 'alarmist' with a predominance of western-orientated news items; that there was a lack of substantive technical information on HIV/AIDS; that sporadic reporting was combined with exaggerated and inconsistent data in some articles. Barcelona (1989) challenged the media to be more systematic and comprehensive in their reporting of HIV/AIDS and to shift from awareness to public information and education with more local or country-based reporting. Barcelona (1989) encouraged the setting up of a media-orientated network that would regularly feed HIV/AIDS news to journalists in the region (Barcelona 1989: 5).

Summary

In developed countries such as Britain, France, the United States and Australia, press coverage of HIV/AIDS followed a consistent pattern. At first, in the early 1980s, the press framed HIV/AIDS as primarily a gay disease, frequently using the metaphor 'the gay plague' to narrow the dangers of the disease to this particular risk group. The press failed to widen the debate to discuss risk behaviours. This occurred only in 1986 with the acknowledgment by governments and the media that the HIV virus could be transmitted through heterosexual sex. This second phase (1986-1987), known as 'the emergency period', saw the start of aggressive government-sponsored media campaigns which often resulted in saturation coverage and moral panics.

By the end of the 1980s, however, HIV/AIDS had lost a great deal of its newsworthiness and the press began to report HIV/AIDS as just another routine medical story. The fear, expressed by health educators, was that this last phase of reporting, known as 'the complacency period', would create indifference towards HIV/AIDS which still exists in the community. On a positive note, reporting in this last phase was described as less sensational with a 'toning down' of stereotyping and stigmatising images. The author noted that the chronology and the shape of press coverage of HIV/AIDS, particularly in the Western press, provided a classic example of what Downs (1972) called the 'issue-attention cycle': the rise, peak and decline in interest of a health issue. This pattern followed a slightly different time period in some of the countries surveyed in this chapter especially in Britain and the United States.

For developing countries in Africa and Asia, denial was a major barrier to press coverage of HIV/AIDS. This was evident in the lack of

editorials and fear in the government-controlled press that the disease would seriously affect the country's international image and subsequently the tourism industry. This, together with a tendency to report the disease as a foreign story, limited awareness and understanding of HIV/AIDS.

Unlike the developed countries, heterosexual transmission accounts for the highest portion of HIV/AIDS cases in Africa. The press in Zambia and Zimbabwe, however, followed a similar pattern of reporting on HIV/AIDS as in other continents. Firstly, coverage was low and initially earmarked prostitutes (not 'gays') as the main offenders and carriers of the HIV virus. This link with the illicit sex trade increased the shame and stigma attached to those living with the disease. This, together with language and metaphors borrowed from the West such as 'AIDS plague' and 'AIDS time bomb' reinforced the fear and helplessness of both the healthy and the sick. Secondly, coverage increased and improved with the acceptance that all heterosexual activity was potentially exposed to the disease. The third stage, reporting the disease as just another routine health problem and thereby increasing 'complacency' among the public, does exist but is more accurately described by the word 'fatalism'.

Generally, in these developing countries, writing about a sexually-related disease is extremely difficult. Sex is still regarded as a taboo subject. Therefore, the inclusion of educational messages concerning sexuality and ways to prevent infection is still a long way off. This, in turn, affected the 'personalization' of the disease and resulted in few news stories about people actually living with HIV/AIDS.

In both the developed and developing countries, there is a consensus about the need to improve press coverage. It was suggested that this could be achieved by improving knowledge of HIV/AIDS among

editors and journalists and employing trained medical reporters. Subsequently, this could lessen the number of negative reports that distort the actual situation through an over-concentration on marginal groups, innocent and guilty victims and people dying with HIV/AIDS.

Chapter Six

Press coverage in the Pacific of HIV/AIDS

Initial media coverage of HIV/AIDS focused on Europe, America, Africa and the emerging situation in Asia. Because of the size of HIV/AIDS epidemic in these countries, minimal attention was paid to other less affected areas in the world such as the 21 Pacific countries and Territories (Sarda and Harrsion, 1995: 6). HIV/AIDS came late to the Pacific region. It is still at a relatively early stage and the full severity of its impact has yet to be felt. A rapid spread, however, is now underway in Pacific countries such as PNG.

According to the Institute of Medical Research (IMR) in PNG, the widespread lack of testing in PNG means that the spread of HIV in that country is poorly understood. Moreover, the high ratio of AIDS cases to HIV infections suggests substantial under-reporting (Duncan, 1995: 147). Garrett (1995), commenting on the low HIV/AIDS figures in the Pacific, agrees with Linge and Porter (1998) that many Pacific Islands lack reliable methods and means to record accurate health statistics. Garrett (1995) also claims that many Pacific nations deliberately cover up their epidemics for political, cultural, and economic reasons (Garrett, 1995: 459).

There is still no published research or survey that tries to analyse the reasons for such under-reporting in the Pacific region especially in the press. In chapter 7, however, interviews with 25 Pacific editors show that the editors remain unconvinced about the impending HIV/AIDS epidemic, preferring concrete facts and figures rather than medical estimates and predictions (Cullen, 1998: 50).

Several newspaper editors in the South Pacific mentioned how difficult it was to write about HIV/AIDS because, in their opinion, it was mainly a sex-related topic. They wondered whether their readers would accuse them of increasing sexual activity by writing about it (Cullen, 1998: 50). However, 53 reports on the effects of sexual health information, initiated in 1998 by the United Nations Department of Policy, Strategy and Research, do not support this view. For example, 27 reports concluded that sexual health education neither increased or decreased sexual activity while 22 reports claimed it delayed the onset of sexual activity (UNAIDS, 1998a:15). Insufficient evidence was found to support the claim that sexual health and HIV education promote promiscuity. Also, defining sex as a cultural taboo topic that may not be considered 'newsworthy' was challenged by Wolffers (1997).

There is a difference between those who use culture as an excuse for not doing what is needed and leave everything unchanged and those who are courageous and dare to challenge the dominant cultural habits and customs (Wolffers, 1997: 53).

The report on 'The Regional Strategy for the Prevention of AIDS and STD in Pacific Island Territories,' (1997), encourages the media in the Pacific to adopt a 'proactive' instead of 'reactive' reporting style. This entails active participation on the part of the media to uncover the story instead of passively waiting for the next workshop or fact sheet. The report also warns against negative reporting.

Discrimination against and fear of those infected with HIV arises out of fear-based reporting plus the association of HIV/AIDS with morality. Fear is evident when people with HIV hide their infections to avoid being discriminated against. The knock-on effect makes the epidemic even more invisible and keeps public perception of HIV risk too low (UNAIDS, 1997b: 10).

The same report argues that public perception of low risk is reinforced by the emphasis in the media on HIV/AIDS as something introduced from

outside the Pacific region rather than a disease transmitted between individuals engaging in risk behaviours whether they are foreigners or other nationals (UNAIDS, 1997b: 10).

Another United Nations report, *Time To Act: The Pacific Response to AIDS* (1996) argues that the media's early emphasis on AIDS being 'a killer disease' made people over-anxious and fearful. In turn, this encouraged discrimination against people who were known to be HIV-positive. The report concludes that as a result, people are often reluctant to go for HIV testing even if they think they may be at risk of infection for fear that they and their family will be discriminated against or shamed (UNAIDS, 1996: 13).

Despite the remarkable growth in the number of Pacific newspapers, circulation figures, indigenous journalists and editors in the past twenty five years (Layton (1992), people often hear about HIV/AIDS from sources other than newspapers. A study, initiated in 1994 by the IMR in PNG, interviewed sex workers, policemen, security men, dockside workers and sailors in the country's capital, Port Moresby, about their main source of information on HIV/AIDS. The results showed that their information came from friends, radios and newspapers in that order (Jenkins, 1997: 48).

Another survey on knowledge of HIV/AIDS was conducted among 896 randomly selected men and women in and around the PNG highland cities of Lae, Goroka, Mount Hagan and a rural area of Madang. When asked where they learned about HIV/AIDS, 841 respondents replied radio (24 per cent); friends (20 per cent); health workers (18 per cent); newspapers (17 per cent) and television (8 per cent). Men learned more from newspapers (23 per cent) than women (12 per cent) (Jenkins and Alpers, 1996: 249).

Another research in 1995 tried to assess the understanding of young people in regard to information on HIV/AIDS. More than 1800 high school students in six highland provinces of PNG were handed a questionnaire containing questions about HIV/AIDS. Although more than 95 per cent of students had heard about HIV/AIDS, 29 per cent thought that HIV was transmitted by mosquito bites (Friesen, Danaya, Doonar, Kemiki, Lagani, Mataio, Mokela, Rongap, Vince, 1996: 213). The findings of the study showed that while information on HIV/AIDS had clearly reached the majority of the population sampled, it is very likely that numerous misconceptions remain. Jenkins argues that serious misconceptions about HIV/AIDS are spread by oversimplified messages such as: a person is protected if he or she stays with a single sexual partner or if they avoid sex with a prostitute (Jenkins, 1997: 18).

These evident gaps in understanding the disease have re-ignited debate on the role of the media and the need to go beyond purely information-based news stories and include educational elements. The Papua New Guinea National HIV/AIDS Medium Term Plan (1998 - 2002) stresses this point.

The media have an important educational role to play as a vehicle for raising the level of HIV/AIDS awareness and understanding among the general population and overcoming denial and prejudice. The national plan lays particular stress on reaching the youth and promoting behavioural change, and recognises the need for in-service training of journalists on HIV/AIDS (1998 - 2002: 1).

In terms of the future, Moodie (1999) is optimistic about improved media coverage of HIV/AIDS and believes the media to be an important ally in breaking down stigmas and dispelling the mythology surrounding HIV/AIDS.

There has been a noticeable shift in the Pacific especially the way the media reports HIV/AIDS issues. Rather than write merely sensational stories, media organisations and journalists have begun to depict the human side of HIV/AIDS and to write more sensitively

while trying to develop understanding of the disease rather than confirm prejudices. (Moodie, 1997: 26).

According to Moodie (1999), one reason for the shift in tone and content in the Pacific was the announcement by Tahitian journalist, Mairie Bopp, at the annual meeting of the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) that she was living with the HIV virus. Bopp, a final year journalism student at the University of the South Pacific, declared her HIV status to more than twenty Pacific editors at the PINA conference, held in Tahiti during December 1998. She was the first media person in the south Pacific to do so.

This act of courageously speaking out has done a great deal to break down the prejudices held within some media organisations and by individual reporters. For the first time, people in the media were confronted with a colleague living with the virus. This has changed preconceptions about the types of people who contract the disease. It has shown it can affect anyone, even a colleague. This realisation has led to a more authentic coverage of the issue in the media (Moodie, 1999).

Several Pacific editors, attending the PINA conference, spoke about her story as a 'breakthrough'. Initially, her story was covered extensively by the regional news media. But as chapter 7 shows, this renewed interest in HIV/AIDS was short-lived.

Summary

The fact that HIV/AIDS came late to the Pacific presents the press in that region with the advantage of learning from the mistakes of earlier press coverage of HIV/AIDS in other parts of the world. A striking feature, however, about the reporting of HIV/AIDS in the Pacific is the fact that only non-government organisations have spoken about the positive and negative affects of press coverage. No one has conducted an in-depth research to examine the actual content of news reports and the reasons

for the lack of consistent and informative reporting. However, criticism of sensational and stereotyping reporting in the Pacific press in regard to HIV/AIDS, indicates that few lessons have been learnt from what occurred with press reports in other parts of the world during the early stages of the epidemic.

As in other developing countries, continued denial of the serious health threat posed by the impending HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Pacific is proving to be a major barrier to press coverage of HIV/AIDS. This, coupled with the cultural taboo of not discussing sexually-related diseases, makes it extremely difficult to include, for example, important educational messages on prevention. There is, however, a consensus among Pacific editors of the need to improve news reports. This could be achieved by providing training courses for medical reporters whose numbers are low throughout the Pacific.

Finally, the important role of the press in the South Pacific to provide information to the public, politicians and other media outlets should not be under-estimated. For example, only nine out of 20 Provincial radio stations in PNG are operating for a few hours each day, and EMTV, the country's only television station, is restricted to urban areas. These shortcomings, therefore, enhance the role and potential influence of the press in PNG to increase information and education on health issues such as HIV/AIDS.

Chapter 7

Press Coverage of HIV/AIDS in the PNG Press : Findings and Analysis.

The first hypothesis of this thesis asserts that the press in PNG followed the trends and repeated the mistakes that occurred with the coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Western Press during the 1980s; a slow response to the threat of HIV/AIDS that targeted particular risk groups, followed by increased coverage with the acknowledged risk to the wider heterosexual community and finally, the gradual decline in reporting HIV/AIDS. The research material for this hypothesis is based on a quantitative analysis of all HIV/AIDS articles in the three major English newspapers in PNG from June 1987 - when the first HIV/AIDS story was reported - until December 1997 when the NAC was set up by an Act of Parliament. The country's two national dailies, The National and Post-Courier were selected for analysis together with the national weekly, The Independent and the country's only provincial newspaper The Eastern Star. In order to chart more recent developments of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in all these newspapers except The Eastern Star, a further quantitative analysis was undertaken over a two-year period from January 1998 until December 1999.

The second hypothesis asserts that the press in PNG concentrated more on reporting the harmful effects of HIV/AIDS rather than describe risk-behaviour and ways to prevent infection. To achieve this, a qualitative content analysis of all HIV/AIDS news items in the two national dailies, The National and Post-Courier was carried out from January 1998 until December 1999. During this two-year period there were not enough HIV/AIDS news items in either The Independent or The Eastern Star to allow for similar research.

The first part of the chapter is divided into the three distinct chronological phases of HIV/AIDS coverage in the PNG press. Firstly, a slow response to the threat of HIV/AIDS from 1987-1997, when press coverage of HIV/AIDS was limited primarily to foreign and local news items with few editorials or front-page news items. Secondly, a period of increased coverage from January 1998 until June 1999 and thirdly, the beginnings of a decline in news items from July 1999 to December 1999. These divisions mirror what happened with press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Western press (North America, Britain, France and Australia). The pattern of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG from 1987-1999 closely resembles the 'issue-attention cycle' theory, described by Downs (1972) as the rise, peak and decline of media interest in a well-established health issue. This research highlights the gradual emergence of the three distinct phases in these PNG newspapers.

The second section of the chapter contains a qualitative content analysis of HIV/AIDS news items in PNG's two daily newspapers, The National and Post-Courier, from January 1998 until December 1999 with special focus on the reporting of risks and harms. The chapter examines the frequency and types of HIV/AIDS news items in the two daily newspapers. Six categories were chosen to achieve this aim: the front-page, the editorial, local and foreign news items, features and letters. The phrase 'news items' is used throughout the chapter to incorporate all the various types of writing formats such as a feature article, letter to the editor, editorial, or a news story. In the tables and graphs, 'news items' are described by the word 'content'. The chapter, for the most part, avoids a comparative research between press coverage of HIV/AIDS and other health issues in PNG in order to concentrate on comparisons with the Western press.

7.1 Post-Courier 1987 - 1997

The Post-Courier, the oldest daily newspaper in PNG, was established in 1969 and in 1999 had a circulation of 28,610 (Philemon, 1999). Although this figure represents a decline in circulation from nearly 33,000 copies in 1998, the Post-Courier is still the largest selling newspaper in the country. During the

ten-year period from June 1987 - when the first story on HIV/AIDS appeared in the Post-Courier (Appendix 21) - until December 1997 when the NAC was set up by an Act of Parliament, a total of 178 foreign news items on HIV/AIDS appeared in the Post-Courier. This accounted for 48 per cent of the overall total of HIV/AIDS news stories in the newspaper from 1987-1997, while local news items (123) amounted to 33 per cent (Table 7.1).

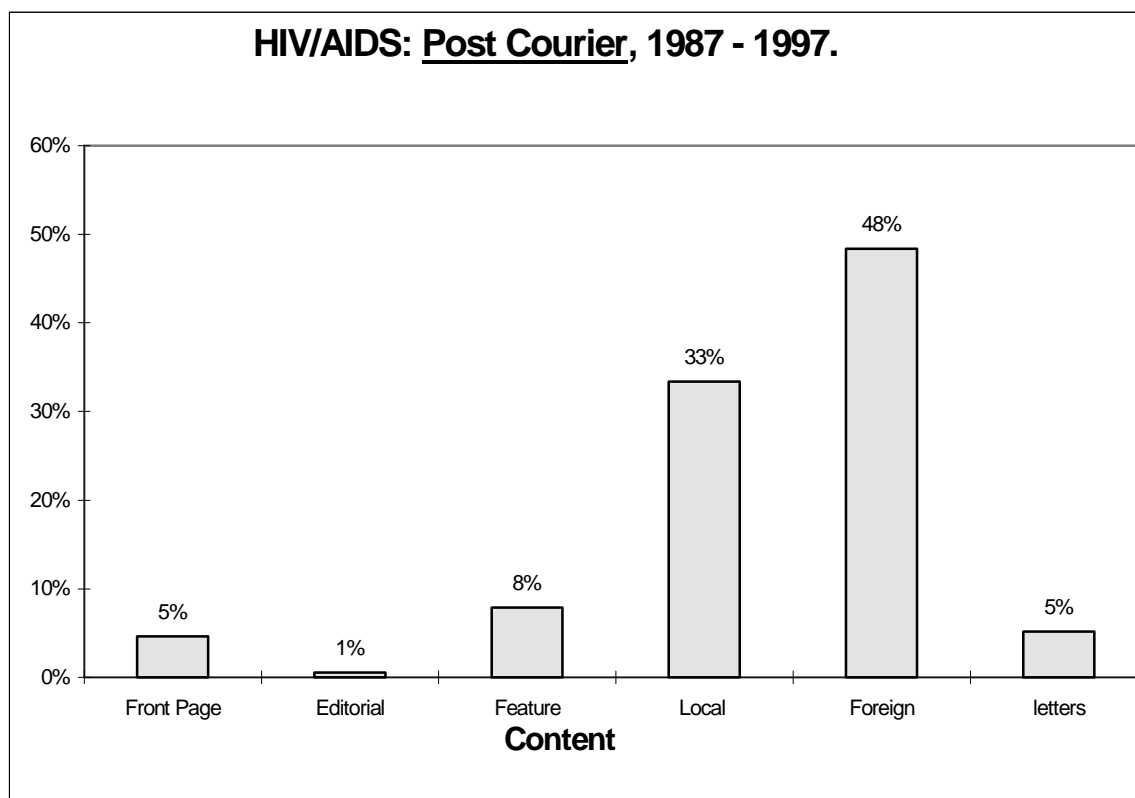
The 'foreign' category refers to news items about HIV/AIDS in foreign countries. On a yearly basis from 1987 until 1993, the 'foreign' category recorded the most news items (Table 7.1). This portrayed HIV/AIDS as more of a problem 'out there' rather than 'within the country'. The front-page of the Post-Courier on 22 July 1987 illustrates this point in a dramatic way when only expatriates in PNG were considered as carriers of HIV (Appendix 22). Both foreigners and foreign countries were singled out as major factors for the presence and spread of HIV/AIDS. This closely resembles what happened with Western press coverage of the disease as described in Chapter 2, except it was homosexuals and drug addicts who were targeted as the main offenders and sufferers. In

Table 7.1

**HIV/AIDS: Post-Courier, 1987-1997.
Number of News Items**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Front-page</u>	<u>Editorial</u>	<u>Feature</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Foreign</u>	<u>Letters</u>
1987	3	0	2	7	13	3
1988	3	0	1	16	25	6
1989	0	0	5	3	21	1
1990	1	0	0	9	15	0
1991	2	0	3	14	17	1
1992	3	0	5	14	20	2
1993	0	0	7	18	14	2
1994	0	0	2	10	18	1
1995	0	0	3	9	20	0
1996	1	0	1	6	11	1
1997	4	2	0	17	4	2
Total	17	2	29	123	178	19

Graph 7.1



1997 there was, for the first time, a distinct shift towards local news items (17) compared to foreign ones (4) (Table 7.1). Until then, except for 1993, the leading category of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Post-Courier was foreign news items which accounted for nearly half the overall total of 368 news items from 1987-1997.

The 'local' category refers to news items on HIV/AIDS within PNG and for the most part highlighted local workshops (33) local statistics (47) or overseas funding (23). From 1987-1997, local news items (123) accounted for a third of overall total of 368 news items. Compared with the other categories, local news items recorded the second highest frequency behind foreign stories. Only in 1993 and in 1997 did local news items out-number foreign ones (Table 7.2). There was a substantial increase in local stories in 1997, denoting a significant swing towards concentrating on the spread of HIV/AIDS within the country. Table 7.2 reveals that 1997 was a turning point for the shift from foreign to local news items. This continued throughout 1998 and 1999.

In 1988 and 1989, the overall number of news items on HIV/AIDS in the Post-Courier were higher than in the following two years (1990-1991). The most likely explanation for this is that the newspaper relied on plentiful information on HIV/AIDS from other countries and Australia in particular. This point raises an issue discussed by Lupton (1994) that the number of news items on HIV/AIDS in the Western press did not always correspond with actual infection rates. For example, in Australia, the rate of AIDS cases peaked in 1994 with 948 people living with AIDS (PWA). However, press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Australia had begun to decline in 1991. This was repeated during the early stages of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG. By the end of 1989, there were 17 PWA and 35 people living with HIV which compares with 55 PWA and 102 living with HIV at the end of 1991 (Appendix 20). Between 1993-1995, when HIV infections began to make a significant increase within the country, press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Post-Courier reached its lowest point.

Table 7.2

HIV/AIDS: <u>Post-Courier</u>, 1987-1997.
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Year	Foreign News Items	Local News Items
1987	13	7
1988	25	16
1989	21	3
1990	15	9
1991	17	14
1992	20	14
1993	14	18
1994	18	10
1995	20	9
1996	11	6
1997	4	17

Front-page news items and editorials are important indicators of how the editorial board views a particular event or issue (Conley, 1997: 56). Only two editorials on HIV/AIDS appeared in the Post-Courier from 1987 - 1997. This amounted to one per cent of the overall news content while front-page news items reached five per cent during the same period (Graph 7.1). These figures confirm that while HIV/AIDS was considered newsworthy, the editorial board was unwilling to lead public debate on the topic. This is evident with only two editorials in 10 years, the first appearing only in 1997. From 1993-1995 there were no front-page news items or editorials on HIV/AIDS. In that same period foreign news items (52) outnumbered local ones (37) and 'letters to the editor' dropped to three items (Table 7.1). A larger number of news items appeared in or around World AIDS Day on 1 December. For example, in 1996, out of a total of 20 news items, eight appeared between 1 December -5 December. In 1997, from a total of 29 news items for the year, nine were reported between 1 December - 8 December. When asked about this uneven spread of news items, the editor remarked that it was easier to lump HIV/AIDS material together and so "get it out of the way" (Philemon, 1999).

This chapter is primarily concerned with comparisons of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG with the three chronological stages of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Western press as outlined in Chapter 5. However, there are interesting similarities with research on press coverage of HIV/AIDS in some Sub-Saharan African countries. Findings from research by Kasoma (1990), who analysed press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Zambia's two national daily newspapers, The Times of Zambia and the Zambia Daily Mail, reveal a similar pattern to what occurred with coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Post-Courier: 60 per cent of all news items published in the two Zambian dailies during a two-year period 1986 - 1987 were foreign while 40 per cent were local in content (Kasoma 1990: 51). Frontpage coverage, however, was higher in The Times (18 per cent) and the Zambia Daily Mail (27 per cent) compared with the Post-Courier (12 per cent) during the same period (1987-1988). Front-page news items in the Zambian dailies, like the Post-Courier, highlighted HI V/AIDS in other countries (Kasoma, 1990: 51). Editorials accounted for three per cent of the overall total. This suggests that while the Zambia Daily Mail and The Times of Zambia devoted substantial coverage to HIV/AIDS, both newspapers, like the Post-Courier failed to lead public debate on the issue in its editorial column.

A later study by Kasoma in 1993 revealed that editorials and front-page coverage had decreased slightly from the findings in 1986 (Kasoma 1995: 13). Kasoma (1990) was concerned that a new disease like HI V/AIDS with no cure and which potentially threatened to kill a large section of the population, deserved maximum publicity in terms of frequency, especially front-page news items and editorials. "Good journalism requires that newspapers carry an appreciable number of front-page, editorial and features stories on a major health crisis like AIDS, so that the issue is constantly kept in people's minds as a very important agenda crying for a solution" (Kasoma 1990, 50).

A similar picture emerged in Puffs and Jackson's (1993) analysis of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe's two national daily newspapers, The Chronicle and The Zimbabwe Herald from 1987-1991. Again, only three

per cent of all news items in the five-year period were editorials, suggesting that the editors wanted to report HIV/AIDS but not lead public debate and discussion (Pitts and Jackson 1993: 226).

7.1.2 The Independent 1987-1997

The Independent, formerly The Times of Papua New Guinea and then The Saturday Independent, is owned by Media Holdings Limited. The shareholders are the mainstream churches in PNG: Catholic (60 per cent); Evangelical Lutheran (20 per cent); Anglican Church (10 per cent) and Uniting Church (10 per cent). It has an approximate circulation of 8,000 and is the largest selling English weekly in PNG (Solomon, 1999). During the 1980s, the newspaper gained a reputation for solid investigative journalism and was the first newspaper in PNG to publish a news item about HIV/AIDS on 12 June 1987 (Appendix 23). Unlike the Post-Courier, The Independent focused mainly on local news items in the ten-year period from June 1987 until December 1997. It published 89 local news items compared with 16 foreign ones (table 7.3). Table 7.4 shows that in 1989, 1990, 1994, no foreign news items appeared in the newspaper and that The Independent framed the disease as a problem within the country. Graph 7.2 shows that from 1987-1997, local news items accounted for 64 per cent of all news content on HIV/AIDS in the newspaper. The Independent did not concentrate on foreigners or foreign countries with HIV/AIDS. Instead, the newspaper consistently reported the disease from 1987-1997 as primarily a problem within PNG (table 7.4).

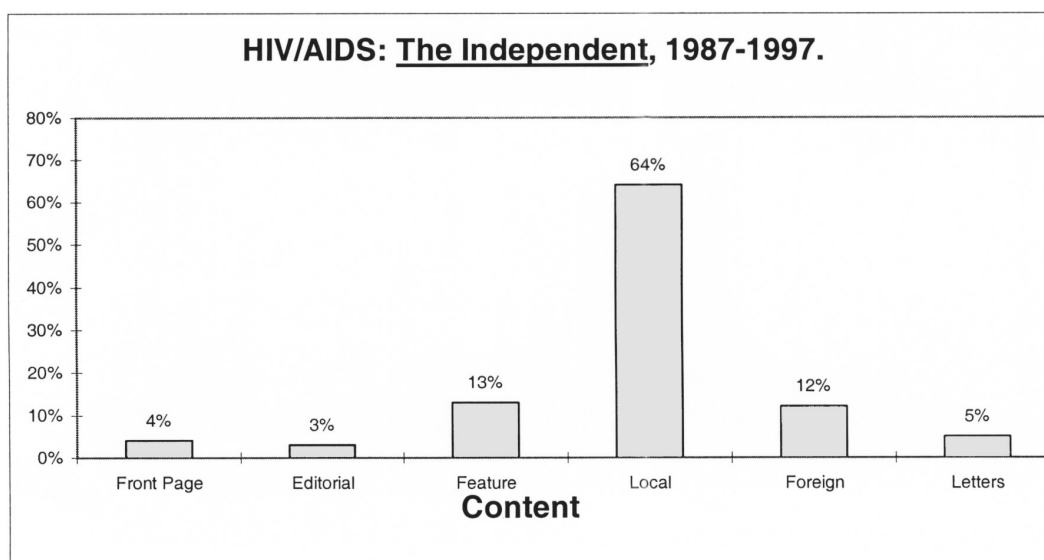
Out of a total of 139 news items on HIV/AIDS during a ten-year period from 1987-1997, The Independent allocated only four editorials and five front-page news items to the topic (table 7.3). The Independent, like the Post-Courier was willing to report HIV/AIDS but not to lead public discussion on the issue. From 1995-1997 there was a noticeable drop in the number of news items in all the news categories (front-page, editorial, feature, local, foreign and letters) compared with the previous years (1987-1994). The only exception was an increase from one to two news items in the 'letters' section. This repeated a similar pattern found in the Post-Courier during the same time

span. Just as HIV/AIDS was beginning to spread and make significant inroads throughout the country, The Independent's coverage began to fade. Since there is no research on audience response to press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG, it is difficult to assess the effects of less news items about the disease upon the readers' perception of HIV/AIDS.

Table 7.3

HIV/AIDS: The National, 1994 – 1997. Number of News Items						
	<u>Front-page</u>	<u>Editorial</u>	<u>Feature</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Foreign</u>	<u>Letters</u>
Year						
1987	0	0	3	11	1	2
1988	1	1	2	9	2	1
1989	1	0	3	10	0	0
1990	0	1	1	6	0	1
1991	0	0	3	7	1	0
1992	3	0	1	7	1	0
1993	0	1	2	14	2	0
1994	0	0	1	10	0	0
1995	0	0	1	5	7	0
1996	0	0	1	6	1	1
1997	0	1	0	4	1	2
Total	5	4	18	89	16	7
Percentage	4%	3%	13%	64%	12%	5%

Graph 7.2



The majority of news items classified as 'feature' in the Post-Courier (8 per cent) and The Independent (13 per cent) contained news feature articles taken from international newspapers or magazines (Graph 7.2 and Graph 7.3). In 1997 neither newspaper carried any news feature on HIV/AIDS while the largest number of news items in this category occurred in the early stages of reporting from 1987-1993. The news feature is an important because it explores and expands discussion on an issue which is not possible in an ordinary news item due to a lack of time and space. Both newspapers, however, chose to use material that examined the problem in other countries and so reinforced the notion that HIV/AIDS was a problem largely limited to foreigners and foreign countries.

7.1.3 The National 1994 - 1997

The National is PNG's newest and the second largest selling daily newspaper with a circulation of 24,000 copies (Senge, 1999). The newspaper, established in October 1993, is Malaysian-owned with Monarch investments, a subsidiary of Timber Company Rimbunan Hijau, holding 51 per cent of the shares (Robie, 1999). The quantitative content analysis examines The National's press coverage of HIV/AIDS from January 1994 until December

1997. During this period local news items which reported largely on workshops, donations, statistics and remarks by various medical and political figures accounted for 78 per cent of The National's coverage of HIV/AIDS (Table 7.5). Like The Independent, the newspaper chose to concentrate on the threat and spread of HIV/AIDS within PNG. The six news feature items in The National, unlike The Independent and Post-Courier, focused entirely on HIV/AIDS within PNG.

In contrast, foreign news items in The National, which reported on the disease in other countries, accounted for only nine per cent of the overall coverage on HIV/AIDS from 1994-1997 (Table 7.6). In two interviews with the editor, Frank Senge (1997 and 1999), the author discovered that although the newspaper had no editorial policy concerning HIV/AIDS, the editor was convinced that HIV/AIDS was a serious health threat that affected the wider PNG population and not merely foreigners.

AIDS will spread because I know the social conditions for an epidemic are well and truly here. Sexual promiscuity is so endemic here and it is coupled with our inability to detect AIDS in any person until they become sick. And in Port Moresby, Lae, Mount Hagen and Rabaul there's so much prostitution. That frightens me and that's why, make no mistake of it, the threat of an epidemic is right here (Kolma, 1999a).

Table 7.5

HIV/AIDS: The National, 1994 – 1997. Number of News Items						
	<u>Front-page</u>	<u>Editorial</u>	<u>Feature</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Foreign</u>	<u>Letters</u>
1994	0	0	0	18	3	1
1995	0	2	0	23	1	1
1996	0	1	1	36	4	1
1997	0	2	5	24	3	4
Total	0	5	6	101	11	7

Graph 7.3

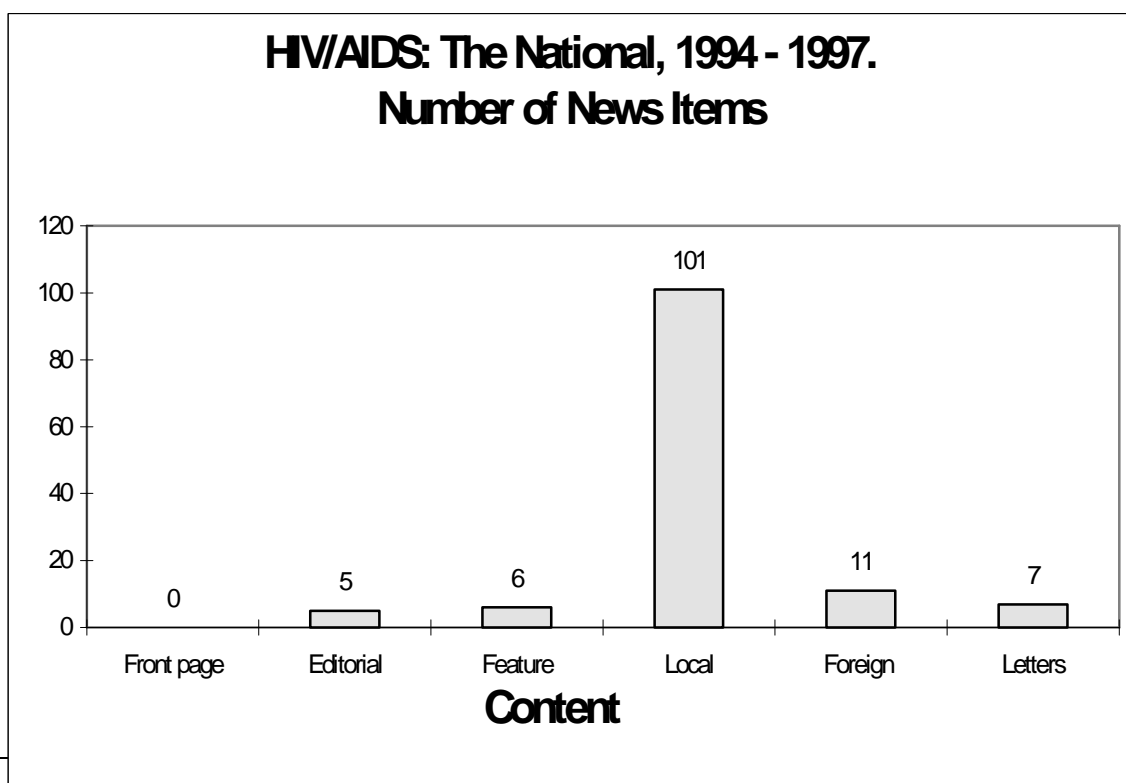


Table 7. 6

HIV/AIDS: <u>The National</u>, 1994- 1997.

	Articles	Per cent
Foreign	11	9%
Local	101	78%
Feature	6	5%
Letters	7	6%
Front-page	0	0%
Editorial	5	2%

This conviction that HIV/AIDS was in the country and had spread already to the main urban areas, may explain the large imbalance between local (101) and foreign (11) news items. In contrast, an interview with the editor of the Post-Courier revealed how, until the end of December 1998, when a fellow journalist spoke publicly at a media conference in Tahiti about living with HIV, the editor remained unconvinced by the threat of HIV/AIDS in PNG.

Well there are so many other issues. And although we may have not covered AIDS that much, we've definitely covered health and rural care in particular. And I suppose for a long time AIDS was seen as a foreign disease that didn't really affect PNG. Besides the biggest killer in this country is malaria. This is a more important story because it affects every Papua New Guinean in the country (Philemon, 1999).

This statement may explain why there were more foreign (178) than local news items (123) reported in the Post-Courier from 1987-1997.

As with the Post-Courier and The Independent, editorials on HIV/AIDS in The National were noticeably low, accounting for just 2 per cent of the overall total of news items from 1994-1997 (Table 7.5). There were no front-page news items. This suggests that while HIV/AIDS was deemed newsworthy

with 130 news items from 1994-1997, the newspaper did not think it necessary to take the lead by instigating public debate and discussion in its editorial content. This may explain the lack of public interest about the disease reflected in the scarcity of correspondence in the 'letters' section. This hesitancy to inform public debate was also present in The Independent and Post-Courier (Table 7.1 and Table 7.3).

Monthly totals for The National from 1994-1997 revealed an uneven coverage of HIV/AIDS with December accounting for the largest number of news items. For example, from a yearly total of 34 news items in 1997, nearly one-third (11 news items) appeared in December. A similar pattern was found in 1996 with 10 out of 36 news items reported in December. The majority of news items in December were centred around World AIDS Day on 1 December (Appendix 24). The Independent and Post-Courier repeated a similar trend. All three newspapers recorded a slight increase in editorial content in 1997. This coincided with the release of figures for HIV/AIDS from the Ministry of Health which indicated a significant increase in the number of people living with HIV and AIDS within PNG especially in the capital, Port Moresby (Appendix, 29). The author noticed a tendency on the part of editors in PNG to rely on official figures. This point is more evident in 1998 and 1999 when the NAC began to issue press releases about the spread of HIV/AIDS within the country.

7.1. 4 The Eastern Star 1991-1997

The Eastern Star, established in 1991, is PNG's only provincial newspaper and has a circulation of 2,500. The fortnightly newspaper is distributed around Alota, the main centre in the Eastern province of Milne Bay. The first news item on HIV/AIDS did not appear until April 1994. Only five news items on HIV/AIDS were reported in the six-year period 1991-1997, four of which appeared on 1 December to mark World AIDS Day (Appendix 25). There were no editorials, news features, letters or front-page news items. All five news items reported the disease within PNG. The editor, Anna Lato Dickson, in an interview with the author, expressed the desire to increase

coverage but listed several complications that prevented a wider coverage: a lack of co-operation with officials from the Ministry of Health who were unwilling to release figures for HIV/AIDS in the Milne Bay area; the difficulty of reporting a subject that was related to sex; and the virtual impossibility of finding someone willing to talk about their illness and so put a human face on the problem (Dickson,1998). Chapter 8 examines these and other barriers to reporting HIV/AIDS, which were expressed by editors in PNG and in several other South Pacific countries.

7.2: Increased Coverage of HIV/AIDS, 1998 - 1999

Post-Courier 1998 - 1999

In 1998, the Post-Courier continued the shift from foreign to local news items on HIV/AIDS (Table 7.7). This trend, which began in 1997 when local news items (17) outnumbered foreign ones (4) for the first time since 1994, was repeated in 1998 with 32 local news items compared to five foreign ones. In 1999, this was repeated with another increase in local news items, up from 32 in 1998 to 38 in 1999. Foreign news items, meanwhile, decreased from five in 1998 to two in 1999. For the first time since 1987, all the news features (six in 1998 and four in 1999) focused on the disease within the country. In previous years (1987-1997), 21 of 29 news feature stories focused on the threat of HIV/AIDS in other countries. These findings indicate that in 1998 and 1999 there was a definite turning point in the Post-Courier's coverage of HIV/AIDS with a determination to increase coverage of the disease and also to highlight the existence of the disease within PNG rather than emphasise its presence in other countries, as happened in the years 1987-1992 and 1994-1997 (Table 7.1). An interview with Oseah Philemon, the editor of the Post-Courier, indicated that this trend will continue in the future (Philemon, 1999).

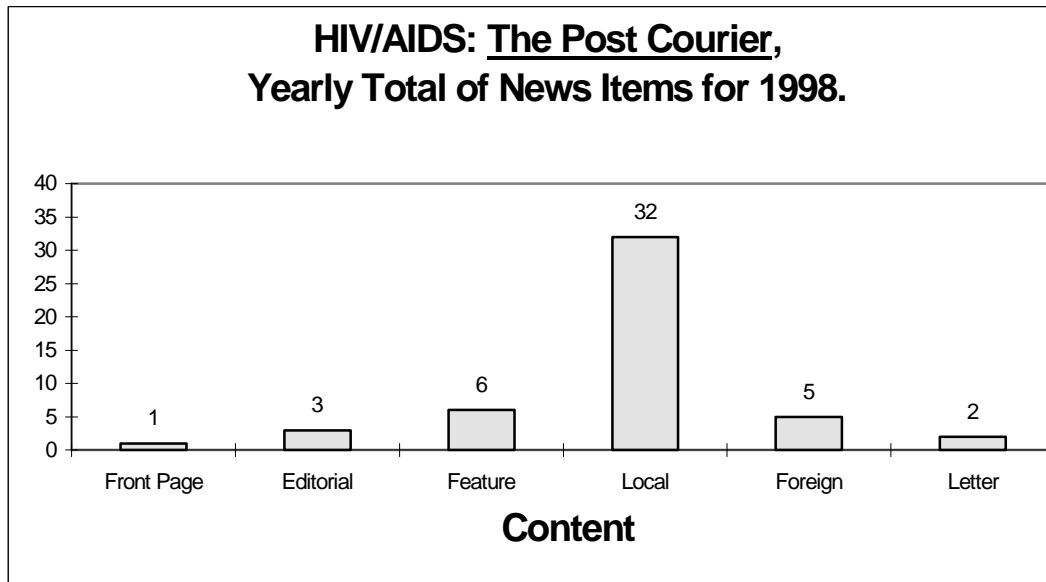
Editorials increased from two in 1997 to three in 1998. This slight rise meant that in 1998, the Post-Courier recorded the largest number of editorials since 1987 when the newspaper began reporting on HIV/AIDS (Table 7.7). More importantly, this increase represented a growing awareness - which began with the first editorial in 1997 - that HIV/AIDS was an issue of public concern.

Table 7.7

**HIV/AIDS: Post-Courier, 1998. Monthly Totals.
Number of News Items.**

	Front- page	Editori al	Feature	Local	Foreign	Letter	Monthly Total
January	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
February	0	0	1	3	1	0	5
March	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
April	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
May	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
June	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
July	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
August	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
September	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
October	0	1	1	2	0	0	4
November	1	0	0	3	0	0	4
December	0	1	2	10	2	1	16
TOTALS	1	3	6	32	5	2	49

Graph 7.4



In 1999 only two editorials were written about the disease. This indicates that while the Post-Courier believed HIV/AIDS was newsworthy by increasing local coverage of the disease - up from 17 news items in 1997 to 32 in 1998 and 38 in 1999 (Table 7. 8) - the newspaper was still hesitant to lead public debate on the disease in its editorial sections.

Front-page coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Post-Courier rose from one news item in 1998 to four in 1999, which was the highest increase in any one year since 1987. All the front-page news items in 1999 reported on the increasing number of HIV/AIDS cases in PNG. This provides further proof that the newspaper had shifted its focus from foreign to local news items. However, in the 12-year period from 1987-1999, only two front-page news items (16 June 1987 and the weekend edition of the Post-Courier, 12-14 September 1997) reported people in PNG who

were living with HIV/AIDS (Appendix 26). This created a misleading impression: that only a few people in PNG were actually living with the disease. This idea was further reinforced in 1998 when none of the 29 news items on HIV/AIDS reported people living with HIV/AIDS. This increased in 1999 to three out of 53 news items on HIV/AIDS. Throughout 1998-1999, only two news items reported people in PNG as having died from the disease despite the fact that deaths from AIDS in PNG had reached 158 by December 1999 (Appendix 29). The major emphasis in 1998-1999 remained on statistics and workshops. In 1998, 13 of 29 news items on HIV/AIDS reported the latest statistics with more than a third of all news items (11 out of 30) from January to June 1999 reporting only statistics.

Kinsella (1989) argues that the 'personal threat rule' is a significant factor in the omission or inclusion of news items concerning HIV/AIDS and especially people living with HIV/AIDS.

"The closer the threat of the disease seemed to move towards those setting the agenda, the bigger the story became" (Kinsella, 1989: 252). As Chapter 8 shows, the editors of The Independent and Post-Courier considered malaria as a far more immediate health threat to people in PNG than HIV/AIDS and therefore, according to Kinsella's (1989) 'personal threat rule', they would not be inclined to expand coverage of HIV/AIDS at the expense of malaria. However, this was not the case with the Post-Courier which in the first six months of 1998 reported three news items on malaria and only two from January to June 1999. This compares with 19 news items on HIV/AIDS in the Post-Courier from January-June 1998 and 30 news items from January to June 1999. Kinsella's (1989) 'personal threat rule' did not prove accurate for the Post-Courier's coverage of malaria.

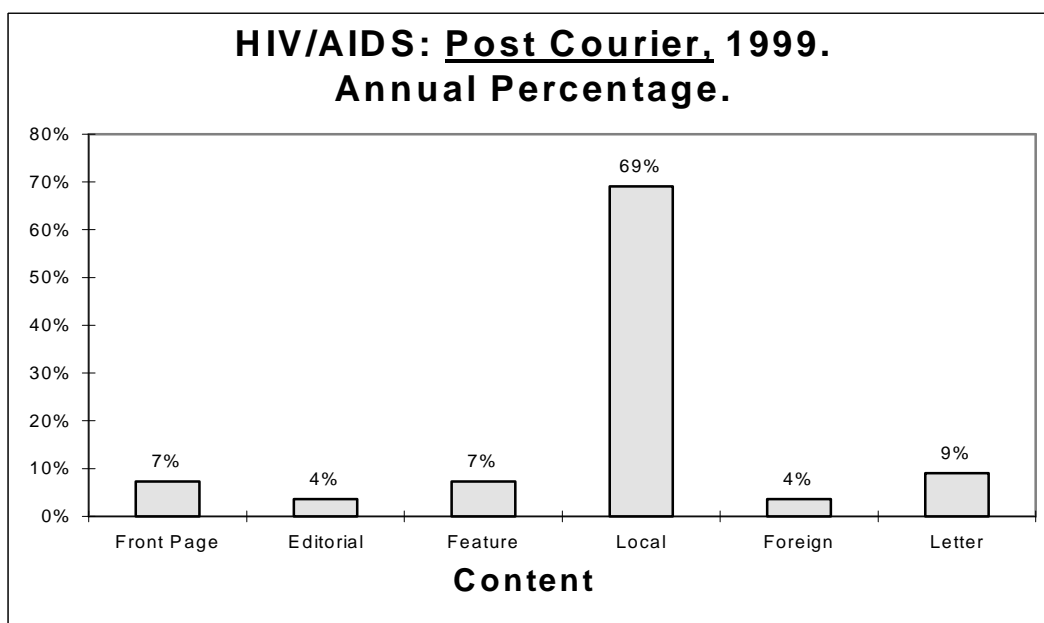
Table

7.8

**HIV/AIDS: Post-Courier, 1999. Monthly Totals.
Number of News Items**

	<u>Front-page</u>	<u>Editorial</u>	<u>Feature</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Foreign</u>	<u>Letter</u>
January	0	0	0	2	0	1
February	1	1	0	2	2	0
March	1	0	0	2	0	1
April	0	0	1	2	0	0
May	1	0	0	1	0	0
June	1	1	0	9	0	1
July	0	0	0	2	0	0
August	0	0	0	3	0	0
September	0	0	1	2	0	1
October	0	0	1	4	0	0
November	0	0	0	2	0	1
December	0	0	1	7	0	0
Total	4	2	4	38	2	5

Graph 7.6



When Tahitian journalist, Marie Bopp, revealed her HIV status to editors at the annual meeting of Pacific Island News Association (PINA) in Tahiti on 19 December 1998, press coverage of HIV/AIDS did not witness a dramatic increase. During the following three months 13 news items on HIV/AIDS were reported in the Post-Courier from January to March 1999 (Table 7.8). The corresponding period in 1998 had exactly the same number of news items. Yet, as Chapter 8 shows, the editor of the Post-Courier, along with several editors from the South Pacific, hailed Bopp's disclosure as a major breakthrough in terms of convincing editors that HIV/AIDS was a serious health threat.

From 1997 to 1999 a large number of news items were reported around the time of World AIDS Day (1 December). This occurred, for example, in 1998 when 16 out of a yearly total of 49 news items on HIV/AIDS appeared during December. Thirteen out of 16 were reported between 1-3 December (Table 7.7). This uneven monthly spread, witnessed in the previous years from 1995-1997, distorted the yearly totals because December frequently accounted for nearly a third of the annual news items on HIV/AIDS (Table 7.7 and Table 7.9). A similar pattern was repeated in The National and The Independent and it highlights a common problem where the media prefer to report on an event rather than describe the process that created the situation. Reporting World AIDS Day is a good example of how an event becomes more important than coverage of the process, which involves providing background information and in-depth analysis over a longer period of time. Another possible reason for an imbalance of news items in December could be that the Post-Courier discontinued its health page in 1996. This had been a regular section of the newspaper since 1986. Lack of reporters, advertisements and information from the health department were all quoted as reasons for the removal of the health page (Philemon, 1999). This made it difficult to place news items on

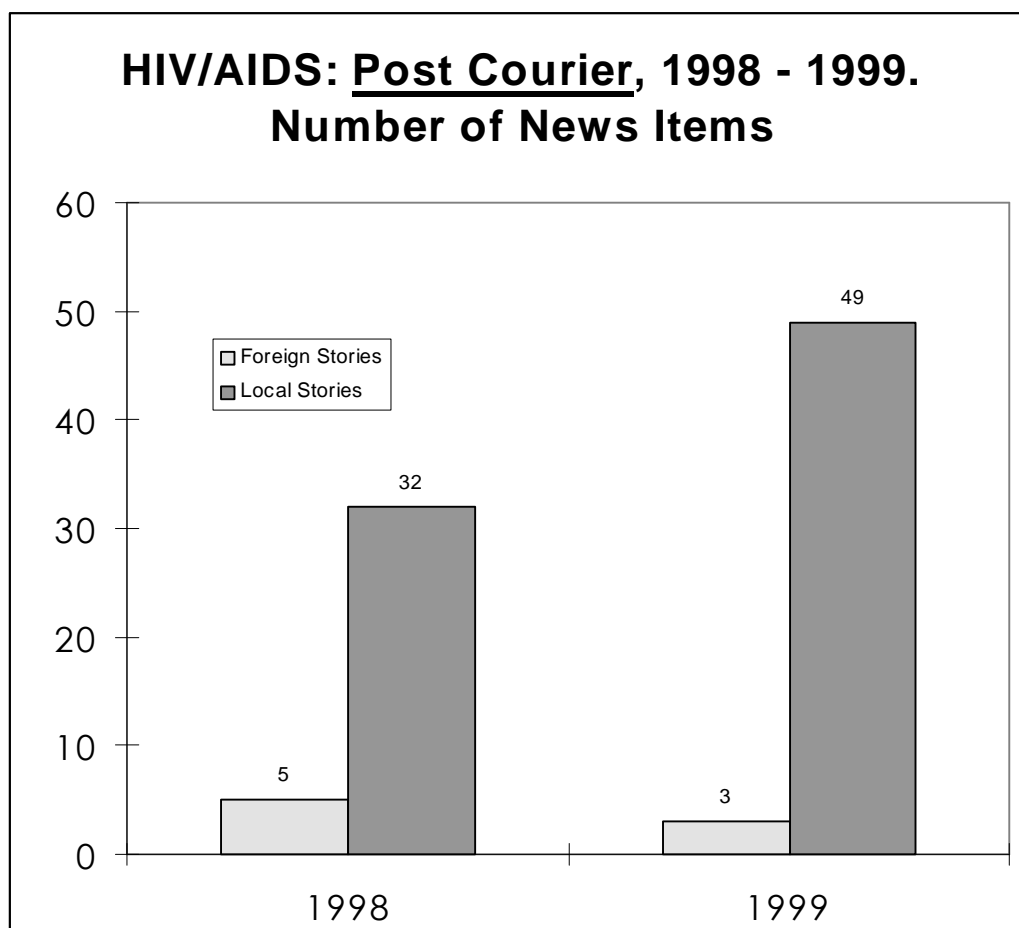
health. World AIDS Day provided an ideal opportunity in which to insert news items on the disease.

Table 7.9

HIV/AIDS: Post-Courier, 1998- 1999.

	Foreign Stories	Local Stories
1998	5	32
1999	3	49

Graph 7.11



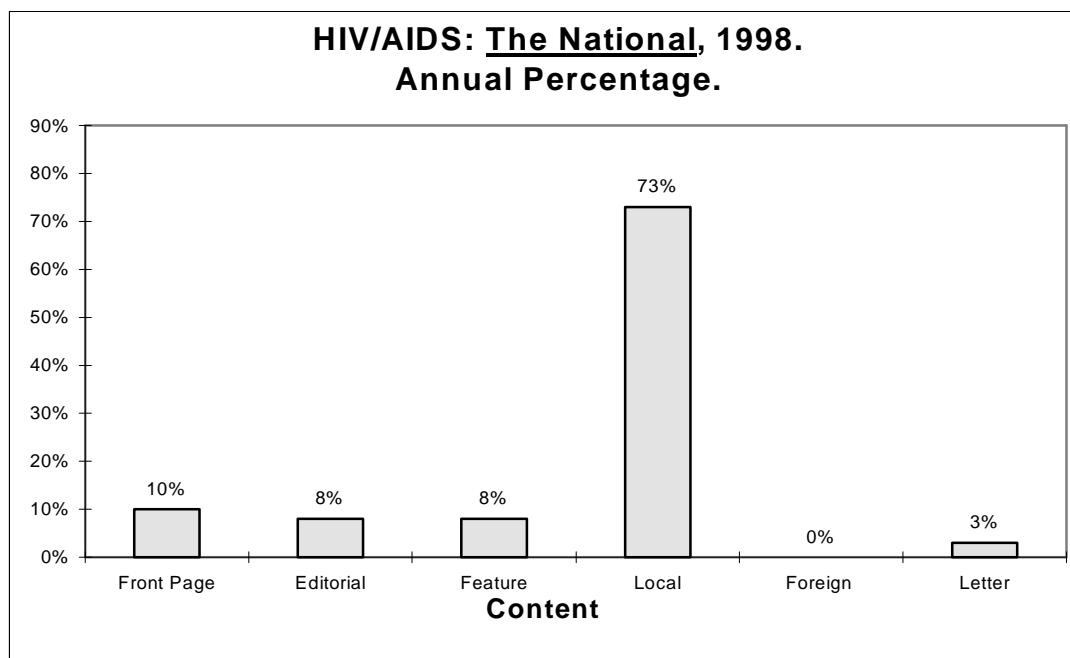
The National 1998 - 1999

From when it was established in October 1993 until December 1997, The National had focused on local rather than foreign news items on HIV/AIDS. In 1998 the newspaper continued this trend with 29 local news items which amounted to 73 per cent of the overall total of news items on HIV/AIDS in 1998 (Graph 7.5) and in 1999 that figure reached 63 news items (79 per cent). This compares with no foreign news items in 1998 and only 3 in 1999 (Table 7.10 and Table 7.10). Apart from 1997, there was a steady annual increase in the number of local news items on HIV/AIDS from 19 in 1994 to 63 in 1999.

Table 7.10

HIV/AIDS: <u>The National</u>, 1998. Number of News Items						
	Front- page	Editorial	Feature	Local	Foreign	Letter
January	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	0	0	0	1	0	0
March	0	0	1	3	0	0
April	0	0	0	2	0	0
May	0	0	1	2	0	0
June	1	0	0	3	0	0
July	0	0	0	0	0	0
August	0	0	0	0	0	0
October	0	1	1	4	0	0
November	1	1	0	6	0	0
December	2	1	0	8	0	1
Total number	4	3	3	29	0	1

Graph 7.5



From January 1998 to December 1999, a total of nine editorials on HIV/AIDS appeared in The National. This was a new trend for the newspaper because from 1994-1997 there were no editorials in The National on the topic. This absence strongly suggests that while the newspaper was keen to report HIV/AIDS as a newsworthy item, it was hesitant to lead public debate and discussion on the disease in its daily editorial. In 1998 there was a noticeable shift of emphasis with the inclusion of three editorials and another five in 1999 (Table 7.10 and 7.11). Two of the three editorials in 1998 were in response to front-page news items on the same day while in 1999, three out of the five editorials were written in response to the front-page news items. Except for one editorial in October 1998 and another in February 1999, the editorials highlighted the growing spread of the disease in the country.

This was the first time The National used editorials to initiate public debate on HIV/AIDS.

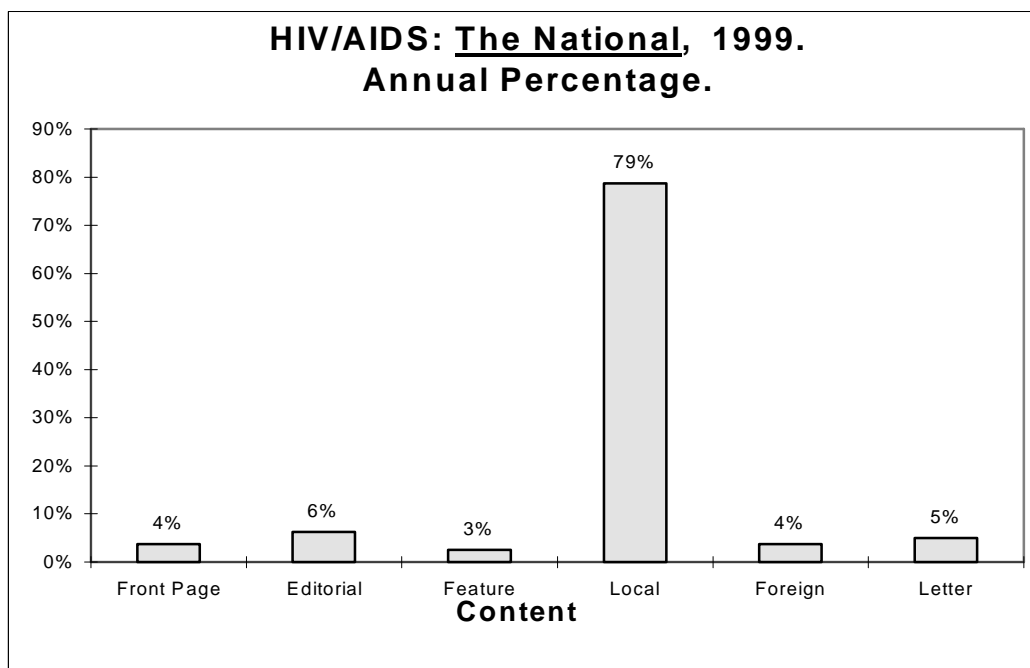
An explanation for the introduction of editorials can be found in an interview conducted by the author in 1999 with the editor, Frank Kolma. "It's about time the media reflected the true situation of HIV/AIDS in our country. And we see it as our role not only to acquaint people with the facts but to invite discussion and so build up knowledge and awareness of AIDS" (Kolma, 1999). Unlike the other editors in PNG who insisted up until mid-1999 (Table 8.1) that malaria was a more important health issue, Kolma (1999) gradually discovered that HIV/AIDS was a real and serious health threat that demanded more space than other health issues. Research by Kinsella (1989) shows that the disease was not adequately covered until or unless editors and reporters had a personal interest or commitment to the issue. In the North American press HIV/AIDS was discussed "most promptly, vigorously and forthrightly where journalists had a personal interest in AIDS or experience of people suffering from the disease" (Kinsella, 1989: 252). This was definitely true in the case of The National's editor.

Table 7.11

**HIV/AIDS: The National, 1999. Monthly Totals.
Number of News Items**

	<u>Front Page</u>	<u>Editorial</u>	<u>Feature</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Foreign</u>	<u>Letter</u>
January	1	0	0	3	0	1
February	2	0	0	2	0	0
March	0	0	0	2	2	0
April	0	0	0	2	1	0
May	0	1	0	5	0	0
June	0	2	1	21	0	0
July	0	0	0	3	0	0
August	0	0	0	7	0	1
September	0	0	0	3	0	1
October	0	1	1	5	0	0
November	0	1	0	5	0	1
December	0	1	0	5	0	0
To	3	5	2	63	3	4

Graph 7.7



The Independent 1998 - 1999

The Independent reported five news items in 1998 on HIV/AIDS. Four of these appeared on World AIDS Day (1 December) and the other appeared on 12 May which included a statement from the Catholic Bishops Conference (CBC) on the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country. The decline of news items on HIV/AIDS started in 1995 with 13 news items. This number dropped to nine in 1996 and eight in 1997. A possible explanation for the decrease in news items emerged from an interview with Kakas (1997), the editor of The Independent from 1996-1998, which revealed that the editor was unconvinced about the potential threat of HIV/AIDS. "I'm more troubled by malaria and heart disease. I mean these are real stories. With something like AIDS, it is a difficult story to do especially about someone with it. We do some articles but not much more" (Kakas, 1997). These comments are re-echoed by other PNG editors in Chapter 8 and expose, for a variety of reasons, a lack of worry and concern about the disease.

In 1999, there was a new editor who re-introduced the health page which had been removed in 1995 because of a lack of advertisements. Its reappearance had an immediate effect on the number of news items on HIV/AIDS which rose from five local news items in 1998 to 16 in 1999 (Table 7.12). Fay Duega (1999), the new editor, wanted to increase coverage of health issues. "Health affects every Papua New Guinean and I want this newspaper to reflect the importance that we attach to health and especially AIDS because it looks as if we're in for a long bumpy ride with it until there is a cure" (Duega, 1999). It is clear that the interest of the editor in HIV/AIDS and the re-emergence of the health page were two factors that contributed to the increase of news items on HIV/AIDS in The Independent and that these two aspects are vital for the future development of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG.

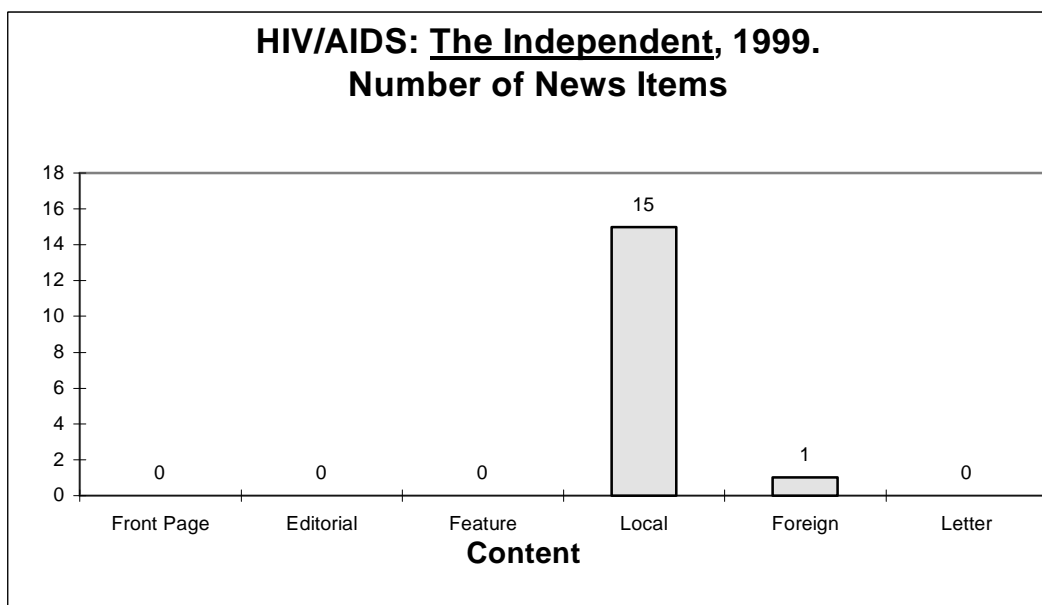
Table 7.12

HIV/AIDS: <u>The Independent</u>, 1999. Monthly Totals. Number of News Items

	Front Page	Editorial	Feature	Local	Foreign	Letter
January	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	0	0	0	0	0	0
March	0	0	0	1	0	0
April	0	0	0	2	0	0
May	0	0	0	3	0	0
June	0	0	0	2	0	0
July	0	0	0	1	0	0
August	0	0	0	1	1	0
September	0	0	0	1	0	0
October	0	0	0	1	0	0
November	0	0	0	1	0	0
December	0	0	0	2	0	0

Total	0	0	0	15	1	0
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Graph 7.9



Throughout 1999, however, there were no editorials or front page news items about the disease (Table 7.12). This indicates that while The Independent increased coverage of the disease, it did not elevate HIV/AIDS from the status of a local news item to a topic for public debate in its editorial comments. There were no 'letters to the editor' in The Independent from January 1998 - December 1999 and only seven from 1987-1997. This reflects a degree of public apathy towards HIV/AIDS which may be partly due to the inability of press coverage to stimulate interest in the topic. The other two newspapers exhibited a similar problem: The National included one letter in 1998 and four in 1999 while the Post-Courier had two letters in 1998 and five in 1999 (Tables 7.8, Table 7.10, Table 7.11). In Chapter 8, the editors of these two newspapers, The National and The Independent acknowledge the lack of correspondence on the topic but fail to suggest a plausible reason. "It's a bit of a mystery because all the letters on AIDS were put in the paper. I mean we never censored or threw them to one side" (Kolma, 1999a).

7.3 The beginnings of a decline in press coverage

From January 1997 until December 1999, there was a steady yearly increase in the overall number of news items on HIV/AIDS in the Post-Courier: in 1997, (29) news items; (49) in 1998 and (54) in 1999. On closer examination, however, there is a noticeable drop in news items in the latter part of 1999. For example, from January to June 1999 a total of 30 news items reported on HIV/AIDS. In the following six month period from July to December 1999 the number of news items on HIV/AIDS declined to 24 (Table 7.9). This decrease in news items in the latter part of 1999 raises an important point. The slide in the number of news items on HIV/AIDS in the Post-Courier from July to December 1999 resembles what Downs (1972) referred to as the 'issue-attention cycle' theory, which claims that media coverage of a well-established disease rises, peaks and then gradually declines in frequency. Since this research examines press coverage of HIV/AIDS from June 1987 to December 1999, it is difficult to predict, let alone conclude, if the decline in news items on HIV/AIDS will continue in 2000 and beyond. Yet, Table 7.9 reveals that a slide has occurred. This may be just a temporary decline or it could prove to be longer-term.

The National's coverage of HIV/AIDS reached a peak in June 1999. That month 24 items on HIV/AIDS were reported and this was the greatest monthly total in any PNG newspaper since reporting on HIV/AIDS began in 1987 (Table 7.10). One reason for the sudden acceleration in news items, up from seven in the previous month, was the announcement by the NAC in Port Moresby that five workshops, planned for June and July 1999, aimed to improve awareness and education about HIV/AIDS in the provincial capitals of PNG. In June 1999 the Post-Courier reported 12 news items, which was the second highest monthly total after December 1998. News items, however, in The National on HIV/AIDS began to decline from July - December 1999 when 35 news items were reported compared to 45 for the previous six-month period, January - June 1999 (Table 7.10). The decrease of news items from 45 to 35 may seem slight and insignificant. It was, however, the first time, since the newspaper began reporting on HIV/AIDS in October 1993, that there was a fall in news items. Since the quantitative content analysis of this research is limited to 1987-1999, it is impossible to argue

conclusively that news items on HIV/AIDS in The National peaked in June 1999. These conclusions can only be affirmed after further monitoring of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG in 2000 and beyond. In the future, it may happen that the 'attention-issue cycle - described by Downs (1972) as the rise, peak and decline of media interest in a well-established health issue - could be repeated.

Part 2: Risks and Harms 1998 - 1999

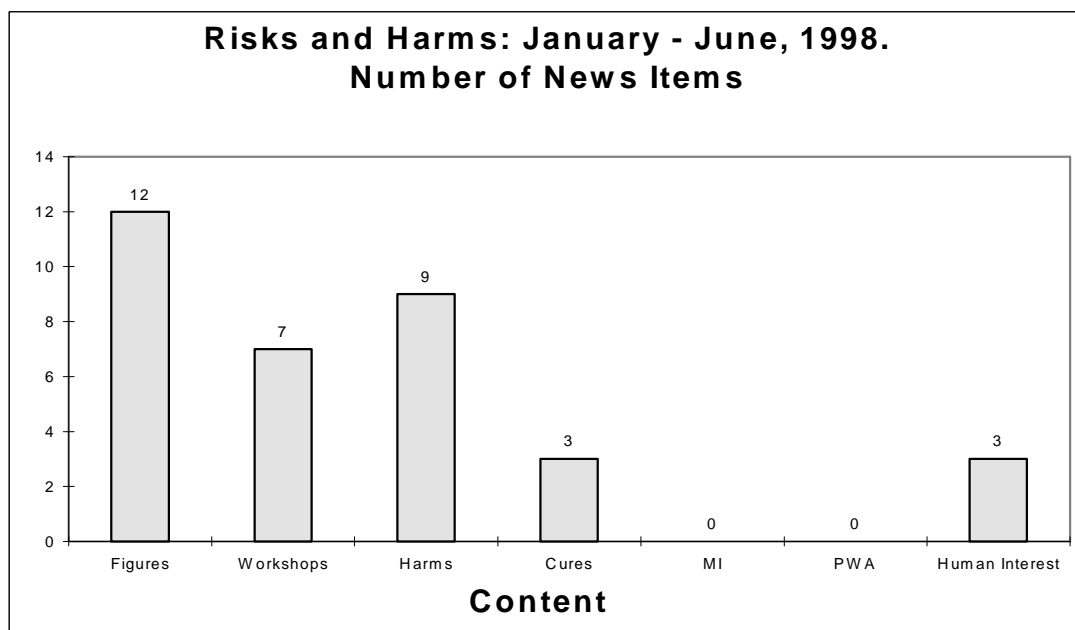
The second part of this chapter contains a qualitative content analysis of HIV/AIDS news stories in PNG's two national daily newspapers, The National and Post-Courier, from January 1998 until December 1999 with a special focus on the reporting of risks and harms. 'Risks' are news items that highlight risk-behaviours which could result in someone contracting HIV and it also includes information about how to prevent such an infection. In this chapter it is categorised as 'Mobilising Information' (MI). 'Harms' are news items that focus on the long-term ill effects of contracting HIV (Table 7.13). During this two-year period there were not enough HIV/AIDS news items in either The Independent or The Eastern Star to allow for a similar research. The main aim of the qualitative analysis is to test the hypothesis of Singer and Endreny (1987) that the media concentrate more on reporting the harmful effects of diseases rather than describe risk-behaviours and ways to prevent infection. This in turn affects the overall content and impact of coverage. The categories, apart from risks and harms, examined in the second part of this chapter include the latest figures, local workshops, possible cures, PWA, human-interest stories and MI (Table 7.13).

Table 7. 13

**Risks and Harms: January - June,
1998.
Number of News Items**

	<u>Post- Courier</u>	<u>The National</u>	Totals	<u>per cent</u>
<u>Figures</u>	7	5	12	35%
<u>Workshops</u>	5	2	7	21%
<u>Harms</u>	4	5	9	26%
<u>Cures</u>	1	2	3	9%
<u>MI</u>	0	0	0	0%
<u>PWA</u>	0	0	0	0%
<u>Human Interest</u>	2	1	3	9%
Total	19	15	34	

Graph 7.10



January 1998 - December 1999

Table 7.13 illustrates how in the six-month period from January to June 1998, The National and Post-Courier gave greater prominence to figures (35 per cent), workshops (21 per cent) and the harmful effects of HIV/AIDS (26 per cent). The category MI, meanwhile, received no coverage nor did that of PWA. The imbalance in the distribution of news items among the various categories - where the latest figures, local workshops and the damaging effects of HIV/AIDS amounted to 84 per cent of the total for the six-month period - gave the impression that HIV/AIDS was more of a theoretical disease than a serious health threat. The continued absence of MI and PWA suggested that only a few people were living with HIV/AIDS and there was little need to include information on how to prevent contracting HIV.

Media researchers, Kristiansen and Harding (1984), argue that the media rarely provide MI because they regard it "as dull, expendable detail and prefer to focus on the issue rather than facilitate public participation" (Kristiansen and Harding, 1984: 365). The researchers, after extensive analysis of the mobilisation of health behaviour by the press in Britain, believe MI is particularly relevant to studies of health reporting because the literature on fear communications in the British press - in which threats were vividly depicted - showed that "such communications are more likely to promote a given behaviour when specific details about actions which will counteract or prevent the health threat are explicitly and precisely explained" (Kristiansen and Harding, 1984: 365). The use of MI, the researchers argue, creates a sense of control while its omission increases feelings of helplessness and fatalism among the readers.

Lemert (1981) opts for a more cautionary approach towards MI stressing that the media's ability to alter health behaviour needs additional sources of information such as interpersonal networks. The media itself is unable to effect behavioural change (Lemert, 1981).

Despite concerns about the impact of MI, Lemert (1981) does agree with Kristiansen and Harding (1984) that the media clearly play an important role in alerting the public to health issues and that MI is an important element in this process.

Lupton (1994) argues that the popular press is an important forum for communicating messages and meanings about health risks. The researcher has no doubts about the importance for the press to use both 'harms' and 'risks' to evoke behavioural change when reporting on HIV/AIDS. Lupton (1993) points to 1987 - when the Australian press participated in the government's 'Grim Reaper' educational campaign on HIV/AIDS - as a classic example of how the inclusion of 'harms' and 'risks' can work effectively. The intention of the 'Grim Reaper' campaign was to shock heterosexuals into a realisation that everyone, regardless of sexual identification, was at risk from contracting HIV and dying of AIDS.

Television commercials and advertisements in the press ran for only three weeks but the campaign became one of the most controversial and well remembered in Australia. 'Grim Reaper' became the single most recalled message or story about AIDS (Lupton, 1993a: 311).

For several months following the release of the campaign the vast majority of newspaper articles were positive, supporting the government's decision to use fear-arousing tactics to create an impact. A large number of editorials in the Australian press called the campaign a 'necessary shock' (Lupton, 1993a: 313). Despite the effectiveness of the 'Grim Reaper' campaign in Australia, no government or media educational campaign on HIV/AIDS has been organised in PNG.

Media researchers, Lemert (1981), Kristiansen and Harding (1984) and Lupton (1993) all argue that the media, and particularly the press, are commonly used as sources of information about health issues. A major reason

for this is that the public rarely refers to specialised medical journals. In PNG, however, information in the two daily national newspapers The National and Post-Courier reported HIV/AIDS in a restricted way. Table 7.13 reveals that from January to June 1998, statistics and workshops accounted for over half the news items (56 per cent) on HIV/AIDS while 'harms' - amounted to more than a quarter (26 per cent). With no news items on PWA or MI, the impression created was that HIV/AIDS became more of a theoretical disease rather than a real health threat affecting the population.

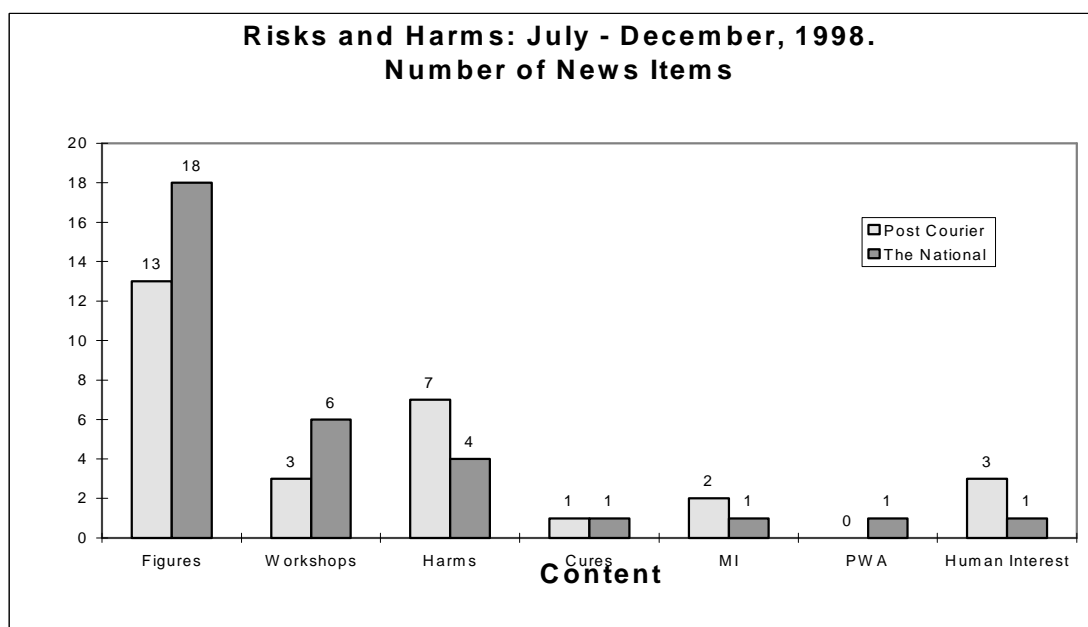
From July to December 1998, the emphasis shifted slightly towards MI with three news items and one on PWA (Table 7.14). Again, the major emphasis centred on presenting the latest figures for the spread of HIV/AIDS in PNG and news items about local workshops that were planned or which had occurred. Both categories accounted for 72 per cent of all news

Table 7.14

**Risks and Harms: July - December, 1998.
Number of News Items**

	<u>Post-Courier</u>	<u>The National</u>	<u>Totals</u>
<u>Figures</u>	13	18	31
<u>Workshops</u>	3	6	9
<u>Harms</u>	7	4	11
<u>Cures</u>	1	1	2
<u>MI</u>	2	1	3
<u>PWA</u>	0	1	1
<u>Human Interest</u>	3	1	4
Total Number	29	32	61

Graph 7.11



items from July to December 1998. Throughout 1998, both The National (47) and the Post-Courier (48) reported nearly equal numbers of news items. Compared with coverage of other health issues in PNG in 1998 such as malaria and tuberculosis, which were allocated no more than three and four news items respectively, HIV/AIDS received substantial coverage confirming that the disease was considered by the editors to be newsworthy. Yet, categories such as MI, PWA and news items on human interest received inadequate and uneven coverage. This imbalance tilted the scale towards a negative portrayal of HIV/AIDS as a distant threat whose inevitable advance could not be stopped. The idea of helplessness was reinforced throughout 1998 by the inclusion of 'harms' and the omission of 'risks' in press coverage of HIV/AIDS in The National and Post-Courier.

From January to June 1999 there was a marked increase in the number of news items on HIV/AIDS in the two national daily newspapers. The National witnessed a threefold increase from 15 news items in the six-month period from January to June 1998 compared to 51 in the corresponding period in 1999. The Post-Courier's coverage of HIV/AIDS

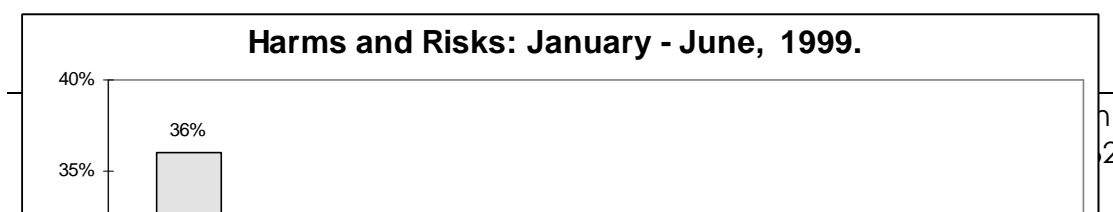
rose by more than a third (from 19 to 30 news items) during the same period. The spotlight remained focused on figures and workshops which accounted for 63 per cent of the total number of news items during the first six-months of 1999 (Table 7.15). This figure represented a seven per cent rise when compared with the same time span in 1998. The PWA category witnessed an increase from zero to five news items in the first six months of 1999. All five news items appeared on the front-page. This increase, although slight, was a significant development on the previous year, which had allocated only one news item for this category throughout 1998. This may be explained as an attempt by the editors to put a human face to the problem. Two of the news items in the PWA category were printed on the front-page of the Post-Courier and three on the front-page of The National (Table 7.8 and Table 7.11). The MI category received no coverage, the same as in the corresponding period the previous year. In contrast, news items on 'harms' remained the same, recording 26 per cent of all news items from January to June 1999.

Table 7.15

**Risks and Harms: January - June, 1999.
Number of News Items**

	<u>Post-Courier</u>	<u>The National</u>	Total	Per cent
Figures	11	18	29	36
Workshops	6	16	22	27
Harms	9	12	21	26
PWA	2	2	4	5
Cures	1	2	3	4
Human Interest	1	1	2	2
Total	30	51	81	

Graph 7.12



From July to December 1999, there was a decrease in the number of news items on HIV/AIDS in both The National (31) and Post-Courier (23) compared with the first six-months of 1999 (Table 7.15 and Table 7.16). As stated in the first part of this chapter, these figures could indicate that news items on HIV/AIDS in The National and Post-Courier had peaked and that a gradual decline, described by Downs (1972) as the 'issue attention cycle' - the rise, peak and decline of media interest in a well-established health issue - was underway. The categories, figures (14), workshops (9) and harms (16), recorded the highest number of news items, a pattern that remained consistent throughout 1998 and 1999 (Table 7.13, Table 7.14, Table 7.15 and Table 7.16). News items on MI increased from zero to seven in the latter part of 1999 (Table 7.16). In fact, in the 18-month period from January 1998 to June 1999, only one news item on MI had appeared in either The National or the Post-Courier. The increase from July to December 1999 denotes a shift towards a more positive type of reporting with news items presenting

information on how to respond to HIV/AIDS instead of emphasising only the harms and damaging effects of the disease.

Table 7.16

**Risks and Harms: July - December, 1999.
Number of News Items**

			<u>Total</u>
Figures	5	9	14
Workshops	3	6	9
Harms	8	8	16
Cures	1	1	2
MI	3	4	7
PWA	2	2	4
Human Interest	1	1	2
Total	23	31	54

7. 5: News Headlines in 1999

An analysis of news headlines provides useful data for the qualitative content analysis of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in The National and Post-Courier. The other two newspapers, The Independent and The Eastern Star did not contain a sufficient number of headlines to analyse. A series of headlines from 1999 were selected by the author because they highlighted, unlike the other headlines throughout 1999, the use of mixed messages and metaphors, which were particularly important in making sense of HIV/AIDS during its construction as a new disease in the public consciousness (Sontag, 1989; Ross and Carson 1988; Treichler; 1989). An example of this can be found in Ross and Carson's (1988) study of the Australian press during the early 1980s. AIDS was explained using six main metaphors: 'AIDS is a plague'; 'AIDS is a punishment for sin'; 'AIDS as crime'; 'medicine as war' and 'AIDS as other' (Ross and Carson ,1988: 240). According to Ross and Carson (1988), these metaphors can create a negative impact on the reader. For example, the use of the metaphor 'AIDS is death', argue Ross and Carson (1988), allows little hope for those who have AIDS, while 'AIDS is a punishment for sin' and 'AIDS as other' serve to stigmatise people living with AIDS.

Metaphors of war were used frequently by both the National and Post-Courier. This was evident in headlines such as: PNG losing the AIDS battle. . . Governor steps up AIDS war . . . Milne Bay fights AIDS. . . PNG losing AIDS fight. . . Step up war on diseases. . . War begins on viral disease (Tables 7.17 and 7.18). Such rhetoric served to position HIV/AIDS as the enemy against which both the tactics of one-one combat and full scale military war should be used. There is division among some researchers about the use of military metaphors. The debate centres on whether it is advisable to use dramatic imagery to alert people

about a potentially serious health threat because if they are viewed as exaggerated claims, this could undermine awareness campaigns (Lang and Lang, 1986; Meyer, 1990).

Graph 7.13

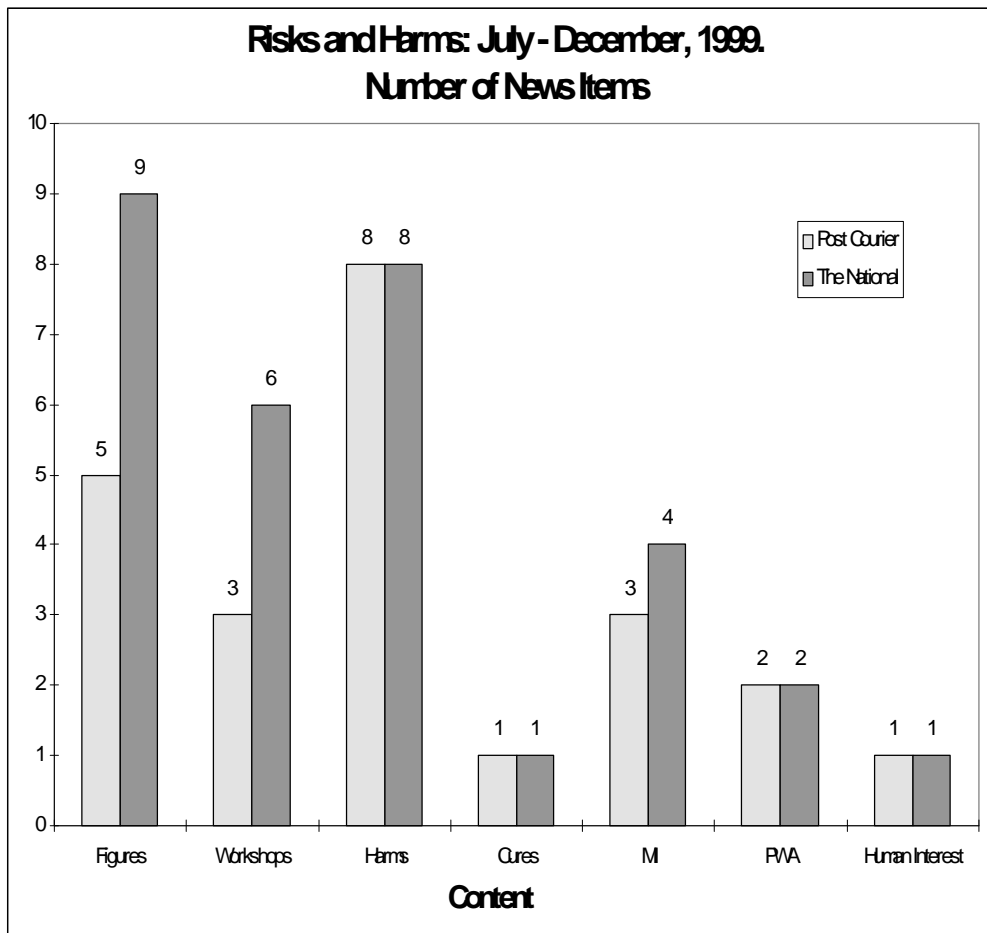


Table 7.17

Selected HIV/AIDS: Headlines in The National, (1999).

“Child victims of HIV worry social workers.”
“Crusade heals AIDS victims.”
“AIDS virus passed on by chimps.”
“Sex workers high-risk group for HIV.”
“Fears rising of AIDS epidemic.”
“HIV/AIDS spreading like wildfire.”
“Rapists warned of AIDS risk.”
“Milne Bay fights AIDS.”
“AIDS to become biggest killer.”
“People urged to help fight AIDS.”
“Government must involve all in AIDS fight.”
“AIDS may be spread via T.B.”
“PNG losing AIDS battle.”
“Screen citizens for AIDS.”
“Governor steps up virus war.”
“Adviser: Condoms best for risky sex.”
“NCD sits on AIDS time-bomb.”
“Schools urged to fight AIDS.”
“Curbing AIDS spread difficult.”
“AIDS: Major killer in PNG.”
“AIDS victims deserve care.”
“World AIDS Day launch.”
“Prostitution and the AIDS dilemma.”
“Forty sex workers test HIV positive.”
“Babies with HIV on the rise.”
“Counselling of AIDS victims stressed at Workshop.”

Another metaphorical way in which The National and Post-Courier presented the threat of HIV/AIDS was to personify the virus: child victims of HIV worry social workers . . . HIV victim at early stage of infection . . . AIDS victim in team to Fiji . . . are just three examples of how both newspapers especially since 1999 tried to highlight PWA (Table 7.15 and 7.16). The term 'victim' was commonly used to describe a PWA and reflected a moralistic interpretation of the disease, promoting claims of innocence or guilt. In Chapter 8, interviews with some editors in PNG confirm that up until 1997, it was not uncommon to narrow HIV/AIDS to high-risk groups such as prostitutes and therefore claim that the disease was self-inflicted (Philemon 1999; Kolma 1999). This was evident when sex workers with HIV/AIDS in PNG were the only group singled out as people living with the virus . . . Forty sex workers test HIV positive . . . Prostitution and the AIDS dilemma . . . Sex workers: high-risk group for HIV. The editors gradually accepted that everyone, and not just sex workers, were potentially at risk from infection. This shift in interpretation was reflected in headlines such as: AIDS will hit almost all households . . . People urged to help fight AIDS . . . HIV/AIDS spreading like wildfire. Yet in 1999, a lingering emphasis on risk groups rather than risk-behaviour was still present in a number of headlines: Sex workers high-risk group for HIV. . . Brothel causes AIDS fear in Rabual. . . Rapists warned of AIDS risk (Table 7.17 and Table 7.18). Although the term 'victim' was still in use throughout 1999, its frequency was considerably less than in previous years.

Table 7.18

**Selected HIV/AIDS: News Headlines in the
Post-Courier, (1999).**

"HIV victim at early stage of infection."
"War begins on viral disease."
"AIDS victim in team to Fiji."
"New HIV cases double in 1998."
" Many blame AIDS on magic."
"Rapists warned of AIDS risk."
"AIDS a new threat in Morobe."
"AIDS to become biggest killer."
"PNG losing AIDS fight."
"PNG AIDS epidemic like African countries."
"AIDS will hit almost all households."
"Brothel causes AIDS fear in Rabaul."
"NCD sits on AIDS time-bomb."
"Step up war on AIDS diseases."
"HIV people in PNG die faster."
"Taku: Screen citizens for AIDS."
"HIV/AIDS spreading like wildfire."
"Workshop to focus on AIDS impact."
"AIDS deaths on rise in capital."
"Doctor: Workforce at risk."
"Don't scare people over AIDS."
"AIDS passed on by chimps."
"Concern over AIDS rise."
"Sex workers: High-risk group for HIV."

Also, exaggerated cliches such as “PNG faces AIDS time-bomb” (The National, 4 February, 1997), began to decline in 1999 (Appendix 27).

Lupton (1994), meanwhile, stresses that the exact interpretation of these headlines is a problem for both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of content. This is because researchers of audience response argue that there is often a multiple of various interpretations according to different social and historical conditions. Therefore texts are capable of multiple meanings. Katz (1978) argues that it is possible to draw a distinction between the preferred or dominant meaning of a message (the meaning that is intended by the originator of the message), the negotiated meanings which result when audiences interpret the meaning and the oppositional readings which occur when members of the audience reject the preferred meaning (Katz, 1978).

There was a significant lack of MI in the headlines of both The National and the Post-Courier in 1999 with both newspapers preferring to report the spread of the disease rather than publicise ways to avoid contracting HIV/AIDS. For example, only one headline in 1999 explicitly mentioned the use of condoms ("National Adviser: Condoms best for risky behaviour." The National, 11 November). This corresponded with the general lack of news items on MI. Out of 135 news items on HIV/AIDS in both The National and Post-Courier in 1999, only seven referred to MI (Table 7.15 and Table 7.16). The omission of the word 'condom' may have more to do with cultural restrictions and difficulty in using such an expression. The author, however, noticed four headlines on the use of condoms in the press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the first five months of 2000. This may signal a change in approach which began in the latter part of 1999 with seven articles on MI (Table 7.16). Headlines that encouraged fidelity in relationships and the need for sexual behavioural change were equally lacking in coverage (Table 7.17 and Table 7.18).

The overall impression of the headlines in both The National and Post-Courier (Table 7.17 and Table 7.18) was that they painted a negative picture of helplessness in the face of a disease that was starting to escalate out of control with little resources and preventive means to counteract its spread. This was reinforced by several headlines that contained a dramatic and fatalistic tone: Fears rising of AIDS epidemic. . . AIDS to become biggest killer. . . PNG losing AIDS battle. . . People in PNG die faster. . . AIDS will hit almost all households. . . PNG AIDS epidemic like African countries (Table 7.17. and Table 7.18). In chapter 8, interviews with the editor of the National and the Post-Courier reveal how sensational news items and headlines on HIV/AIDS were used to grab attention rather than inform the readers (Philemon, 1999 and Kolma, 1999).

Conclusion: A Slow Response, 1987 - 1997

Chapter 5 highlighted how In the early stages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in certain Western countries (1982-86), the press in Britain, France, Australia and the United States identified the homosexual community, and to a lesser extent drug addicts, as the prime focus of HIV/AIDS coverage. Both these groups were used to explain the origins and the initial limited spread of the disease. Likewise, in the early stages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in PNG (1987-1994), the Post-Courier targeted foreigners and placed more emphasis on HIV/AIDS in other countries than within PNG. Subsequently, the newspaper failed to alert its readers to the possibility of HIV/AIDS infection in the wider PNG population. The reason for this failure is partly explained in Chapter 8 where the editor of the Post-Courier together with several other editors in PNG admit to responding slowly to HIV/AIDS because figures for HIV infection were low and so they were not convinced by the threat of the disease. The

editor of the Post-Courier believed that malaria was a far more immediate and serious illness.

Unlike the Post-Courier, the other three newspapers, The National, The Independent, and The Eastern Star framed the disease as a problem within the country. The National reported 101 local news items compared to 11 foreign ones from 1994-1997. The Independent followed a similar pattern by reporting 89 local news items compared with 16 foreign ones. The Eastern Star published five news items on HIV/AIDS in six years (1991-1997), all of which were local in content. However all three newspapers, together with the Post-Courier, failed in the early stages of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG to adequately put a human face on the problem. Foreigners and prostitutes were the only people named as living with the virus. This presented HIV/AIDS as a disease restricted to certain groups rather than a real and serious potential threat to everyone. This practice was also evident in the Western press where homosexuals and drug addicts were labelled as both the carriers and sufferers of HIV/AIDS. The lack of news items about people in PNG living with HIV/AIDS was evident in The National from 1994-1997 when only two of 101 local news items reported PWA in PNG. The Independent followed a similar pattern: two of 89 local news items focused on Papua New Guineans with HIV/AIDS. For the most part, local news items reported on workshops, statistics, funding and a few government statements.

Only in 1987 did The Independent (10 June) and the Post-Courier (23 September) report (on the front-page) that people in PNG had died from the disease. For nine years, from 1988 -1997, none of the newspapers in PNG reported the name of anyone who had died from the disease. This denial of death was also evident in the findings of Kasoma's (1990 and 1995) study of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Zambia and Pitts and Jackson's (1993) research of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Zimbabwean press. While it is the case that people in

PNG began to die of AIDS in larger numbers in the late 1990s (Appendix 20), it is difficult to understand why these deaths were not reported in PNG and why the same practice existed among the press in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Interviews conducted by the author in 1999 with several editors in PNG failed to establish a reason for this omission. Further research in cultural practices and taboos concerning death is required if a plausible explanation is to be found.

The major findings from 1987-1997 demonstrate the fact that the editorial boards of the Post-Courier, The National and The Independent believed HIV/AIDS to be a newsworthy health topic. This is evident in the total number of news items attributed to HIV/AIDS in comparison with other health stories in PNG. Malaria, which is described by the majority of PNG editors in Chapter 8 as more serious than HIV/AIDS, was not allocated more than four news items in any year from 1987-1997. In contrast, HIV/AIDS received substantial press coverage as seen in The National's allocation of 130 news items from 1994 -1997. None of the newspapers, however, wanted to lead public debate and discussion on the topic as seen from the noticeable lack of editorials during the same period. Front-page coverage was also restricted. From 1994-1997, there were no front-page news items in either The National or The Independent.

The Post-Courier, especially from 1987-1993, was the only newspaper in PNG to concentrate more on foreign rather than local news items creating the impression that HIV/AIDS was a problem outside the country rather than within it. Initially, the Post-Courier focused on foreigners as the main carriers of HIV. Later this was extended to prostitutes.

1998 - 1999

Both the National and Post-Courier increased coverage of HIV/AIDS, especially in the number of editorials and front-page news items. This increase, although slight, suggested a desire on the part of both editors to shift from merely reporting HIV/AIDS as newsworthy story to editorialising the topic and therefore, leading public debate on the issue. This followed the chronological pattern of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Western press where, after an initial slow response, there was a marked increase in coverage. Yet, during the six-month period from July to December 1999, there was a slight decline in the number of news items in both daily newspapers. It is difficult to predict if news items on HIV/AIDS will increase or decrease in 2000 and beyond. It is possible that the 'issue-attention cycle' - described by Downs (1972) as the rise, peak and decline of media interest in a well-established health issue - could be repeated if there was a dramatic increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases, followed by a new round of initiatives to contain the disease. Overall, the editors in PNG were more convinced about the serious threat of HIV/AIDS in 1998-1999 than in the period from 1987-1997.

The Independent witnessed a significant increase in the number of HIV/AIDS news items in 1999, up to 16 from five in 1998. The arrival of a new editor in 1999 who wanted to increase awareness and education of HIV/AIDS in the newspaper together with the reintroduction of a health page in March 1999 helped rekindle renewed impetus towards reporting the disease. The previous editor was unconvinced by the threat of HIV/AIDS, which most likely contributed to the decline of HIV/AIDS news items from 1996-1998. Both The National and Post-Courier removed their health pages in 1996. Further research is needed to evaluate the importance of maintaining a health page for information and education on health issues like HIV/AIDS.

The central hypothesis of this thesis stated that press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG during the 1990s repeated the trends and mistakes found in the reporting of HIV/AIDS in the Western press during the 1980s: initially a slow response that framed the disease as limited to certain risk groups, followed by increased coverage with the acknowledgement of risk to the wider heterosexual population. Finally there was a gradual decrease in the number of news items on HIV/AIDS. Findings from the quantitative content analysis in Chapter 7 reveal that the press in PNG from 1987-1999 followed this pattern of reporting with variations in timing and emphasis.

Findings from the qualitative research in The National and Post-Courier from January 1998 to December 1999 reveal that both newspapers gave greater prominence to certain categories, namely figures for HIV/AIDS, local workshops and the harmful effects of HIV/AIDS. Meanwhile, the category MI (which included information on risks) and PWA received coverage only towards the end of 1999. The imbalance in the distribution of news items among the various categories created the impression that HIV/AIDS was more of a

theoretical disease rather than a serious health threat. The absence of PWA and MI added to the idea that only a few people in PNG were living with HIV/AIDS, and that there was little need to include information on how to prevent contracting HIV. Admittedly, this improved in the latter part of 1999 when several news items on MI and PWA began to appear. The metaphors used in the headlines of news items in both The National and Post-Courier (Table 7.17 and Table 7.18) painted a negative picture of helplessness in the face of a disease that was starting to escalate out of control. Only a few of the headlines suggested ways to counteract its spread. This rather fatalistic view of the disease was toned down towards the end of 1999 and replaced with more headlines that encouraged people to avoid risk-behaviours and support those living with HIV/AIDS.

The qualitative content analysis of news items on HIV/AIDS in The National and Post-Courier in 1998-1999 tried to test the hypothesis developed by Singer and Endreny (1987) that the media do not report 'risks' and ways to prevent contracting illness and instead, prefer to concentrate on the harmful effects of that disease such as long-term suffering. The findings from this research confirm this hypothesis with 26 per cent of news items in 1998 and more than 20 per cent in 1999 concentrating on the harmful effects of HIV/AIDS. In contrast, there were no news items challenging risk-behaviours in 1998 and only five per cent in 1999.

Chapter Eight

Interviews with Editors in PNG and the South Pacific.

Introduction

In order to supplement and support the findings of Chapter 7, this section examines the motivations for how HIV/AIDS was reported in PNG and in other South Pacific countries. Editors were chosen because as previous researchers have demonstrated, they wield considerable influence in the selection of news stories (Breed, 1954; Gieber, 1956; White, 1964; Sigelam, 1973; Janowitz, 1975; Baker, 1980; Conley, 1997; Layton, 1998b). Breed (1954) highlighted the important position and influence of editors and argued that for journalists, obligation and esteem for superiors was deemed to be a top priority in the newsroom (Breed, 1954: 335). Gieber (1956) proposed that news is what newspaper editors decide to make it while Baker (1980) qualified this remark by adding that when editors act as 'gatekeepers' - choosing to carry or discard a news story - their decision is not based on the subjective whim of one individual but learnt through a "strong socialisation process related directly to instruction, by example, by correction and by reward or punishment within the organisation" (Baker, 1980: 142). Conley (1997) argues that enormous changes in technology and ownership have left editors with a more defined role. The editor takes legal responsibility for what the newspaper prints, participates in various public relations exercises and is still in charge of front page and editorial content, two of the most important sections in any newspaper (Conley, 1997: 80).

Layton (1998) has conducted extensive research on the media in the South Pacific and agrees with Conley (1997) that editors are key

figures when it comes to the inclusion or omission of news stories especially those that might be potentially controversial. “The importance of editors in the South Pacific should not be underestimated. There needs to be more focus on the news decision makers - the chief of staff, editors, publishers. They’re the ones, after all, who decide what issue or event is covered and whether to leave aside anything that could possibly unsettle their readers” (Layton 1998b). The author acknowledged this fact in regard to HIV/AIDS stories and together with the findings from previous researchers on the role of editors as ‘gatekeepers’, decided to limit interviews to editors instead of questioning a wider selection of journalists.

A total of 10 editors from the four major newspapers in PNG were interviewed concerning their knowledge, understanding and attitude towards HIV/AIDS (Appendix 4). To expand the research beyond PNG, the author interviewed editors in six other South Pacific countries. The countries were selected to reflect the three distinct ethnic groups in the region: Fiji (Melanesia); Samoa and Tonga (Polynesia); Federated States of Micronesia (Micronesia); New Caledonia (French Melanesia) and Tahiti (French Polynesia). This chapter, while divided into different ethnic sections (Melanesian, Polynesian, Micronesian and French Melanesia and Polynesia), concentrates more on editors in both PNG and Fiji because these two countries contain the largest and longest established press in the South Pacific. Moreover, the author discovered that ethnic differences did not make a noticeable difference in the editors’ approach to reporting HIV/AIDS. Interviews were sought with the editors of the major daily newspapers in each selected country.

The Interview

Initially, the author had attempted to formulate a questionnaire and send it to the editors. However, the editor of The National, Frank Kolma (1999a), argued that because of their busy schedules, many editors would either put a questionnaire in a drawer or throw it in the nearest bin. Kolma (1999a), together with two other editors in PNG (Solomon, 1999; Philemon, 1999), strongly recommended personal interviews. The author, therefore, arranged face-to-face interviews with 25 editors in seven South Pacific countries. Each interview was taped and lasted at least one hour. The author asked every editor a minimum of six questions and a maximum of 12 questions. (Appendix 5). The number of questions asked depended on the interest, knowledge and reflection of each individual editor.

Table 8.1 highlights the fact that six out of the 12 questions were answered by all the editors while Table 8.2 details the remaining six questions. The replies in Table 8.1 reveal that only 12 per cent of the editors were satisfied with their current knowledge of HIV/AIDS implying a degree of ignorance about the disease. Despite the fact that HIV/AIDS has existed in the South Pacific for at least ten years - the first case was diagnosed in PNG in 1987 - none of the editors had an editorial policy about a problem which has the potential to devastate the political, economic and social fabric of many countries in the South Pacific. But the absence of editorials about the disease may have more to do with the lack of priority given to health issues and the fact that malaria was considered of greater concern to the editors. At least 76 per cent of the editors thought malaria was more newsworthy than HIV/AIDS.

Meanwhile 16 per cent of the editors said their newspaper had a health page while only eight per cent employed a full-time health reporter. Usually, health topics were covered by a general reporter. Chapter 7 showed that where a health page and full-time reporter

existed, more articles on health and HIV/AIDS appeared (Table 7. 6, Table 7. 8 and Table 7.10). Nearly two-thirds of the editors had not knowingly met someone living with HIV/AIDS. During the interviews, the author noticed that those editors who had encountered a person living with HIV/AIDS adopted a more open and concerned approach to the problem.

In order to analyse the reasoning behind the responses, especially to the questions in Table 8. 1, the author carried out face to face interviews with 25 editors in seven South Pacific countries. The chapter is divided into four sections; the first deal with countries that are primarily Melanesian namely PNG and Fiji; the second part concentrates on editors from Polynesia especially Samoa and Tonga; the third part focuses on French Melanesia and French Polynesia while the last section contains a brief look at the press in Pohnpei, the capital of Micronesia. The author set out to divide the chapter in this way so as to establish if there were any particular ethnic influences upon the reporting of HIV/AIDS, and to analyse if there were other factors apart from the personal views of the editors which dictated certain responses. For example, in Samoa, unlike the other countries, there was alleged pressure from the government-owned Savali newspaper to camouflage the real situation by keeping the figures for HIV/AIDS as low as possible. Where applicable, the four sections contain comments by researchers on press coverage of HIV/AIDS.

8.1 Melanesia: Editors in PNG and Fiji.

PNG

The author interviewed 10 former and current newspaper editors in PNG between September 1998 and May 1999. PNG has the greatest number of HIV/AIDS cases in the South Pacific, more than the combined figures of all the other Pacific Islands and territories (Appendix 20). The combined cumulative figure for HIV/AIDS in PNG had reached 2,100 by the end of March 2,100. This is viewed as a highly conservative estimate and UNAIDS (1996) suggests that for each recorded HIV case there are another 10 undetected HIV infections. This indicates that the number of HIV/AIDS cases is around 20,000 rather than just over 2,000. To mark 1999 World AIDS Day, the editor of The National wrote an editorial emphasising the seriousness of HIV/AIDS in the country.

The majority of men in this country refuse to wear condoms when having sex. The majority of women feel unable to insist that they do. And there are believed to be up to 20,000 HIV/AIDS sufferers in PNG. These three short statements sum up how the silent killer grows among our people each day and will strike family after family in the next decade. The surest way of ensuring this disease will kill thousands of Papua New Guineans is by maintaining silence, by pretending it is none of our business and by telling ourselves that AIDS is something other people get and not us...There is a particular responsibility on the shoulders of the readers of this newspaper and you are in a position to carry the message to hundreds of thousands in this country who cannot read and together form a channel of communication that can save the lives of our countrymen and women (Kolma (1999a)).

This statement, which begins with a sense of hopelessness and inevitability about the continuing spread of HIV/AIDS in PNG, ends with a call to action. The editorial was written by an editor who has gradually grown to accept the reality of the HIV/AIDS epidemic sweeping through PNG. In interviews with Kolma (1997 and 1999) it was obvious to the author that this editor had realised at an early stage the potentially damaging social, economic and developmental consequences which HIV/AIDS could inflict upon the population in PNG. This may explain why, since 1994, The National has topped the

other two major newspapers, The Independent and Post-Courier, in its coverage of HIV/AIDS within the country (table 7.5). Also, The National has gradually begun to overtake the Post-Courier in the number of editorials and front page stories from the beginning of 1999 (Table 7. 9 and Table 7.10).

Research has shown that a personal interest in HIV/AIDS as witnessed in the case of The National's editor can influence the frequency of articles. Kinsella (1989) asserts that HIV/AIDS was not adequately or properly covered until or unless editors and reporters had a personal interest or commitment to the issue. Kinsella (1989) speaks of the 'personal threat rule': "The closer the threat of the disease seemed to move towards those setting the agenda, the bigger the story became" (Kinsella, 1989: 252). Kinsella (1989) concludes that in North America HIV/AIDS was discussed "most promptly and vigorously where journalists had a personal interest in AIDS or experience of people suffering from the disease" (Kinsella, 1989: 253). This view is supported by Garret (1992) who argues that in future the HIV/AIDS epidemic "will continue to fall victim to news room boredom and coverage will depend greatly upon the dedication of individual journalists and editors" (Garret, 1992: 275). Kolma (1999a) was the only editor interviewed by the author in PNG who stated that he knew some people in the country who were living with HIV/AIDS. This fact, according to Kolma (1999a), had influenced his understanding and approach to HIV/AIDS.

Kolma's (1999a) call for decisive action has been more of a lone voice than a common response to HIV/AIDS in PNG. This was evident with the use of editorials (or the lack of them) which indicate where a newspaper stands on an issue. Kasoma (1990), who researched press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Zambian press in the late 1980s, noted that "Zambian editors did not think AIDS news stories were important

enough to deserve page one treatment or editorialising despite the fact that they found them newsworthy by frequently reporting them" (Kasoma, 1990: 57). During further research in early 1990s, Kasoma (1996) noted that the Zambian press was not forthcoming in leading the debate on HIV/AIDS. This was evident, according to Kasoma (1996), in the lack of editorials about the disease. This statement is equally applicable to what happened in PNG.

Compared to the reporting of other health issues in PNG such as malaria or tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS received substantial coverage but little in the way of front page stories or editorials. The author notes that throughout 1998 the Post-Courier reported on 16 types of illnesses. None of them, however, were allocated more than three news stories. In contrast, the total number of news items on HIV/AIDS amounted to 49 (Table 7.7). While the frequency of HIV/AIDS stories in the Post-Courier was a clear sign that the disease was newsworthy, there was a noticeable gap in front page stories or editorials about the disease. Kasoma (1990) argues that editorials on HIV/AIDS are essential. "Good journalism requires that newspapers carry an appreciable number of editorials and features on a major health crisis like AIDS so the issue is constantly kept in people's minds as a very important agenda crying for solutions" (Kasoma, 1990: 50). When asked about the use of editorials to highlight HIV/AIDS, the editor of the Post-Courier echoed a common response found among editors in PNG.

Well there are so many other issues. And although we may have not covered HIV that much in our editorials, we've definitely covered health and rural health care in particular. I'm not trying to undermine AIDS because it is a big problem. I mean that's why we cover it from time to time. And you must remember that health is a huge portfolio and HIV/AIDS forms just one component of a whole range of problems (Philemon, 1999).

To support this statement, it was noted in chapter 7 that in the ten-year period from 1987-1997, only two editorials on HIV/AIDS appeared in the Post-Courier and they appeared towards the end of 1997.

Sela (1999), editor of the Post-Courier from 1978-1992, believes the issue of HIV/AIDS was over-rated during his time as editor. As a consequence the disease did not appear in any editorial.

When you consider other diseases such as malaria and malnutrition, I think AIDS was given too much publicity. Early on we covered it but most the material was from foreign international agencies like Panos and Gemini and we used their stories about unprotected sex. I mean there were more immediate problems than AIDS. But we did not sweep AIDS into a corner but neither did we want to exaggerate its prominence (Sela, 1999).

Philemon (1999) points to malaria as a health issue that warrants more immediate concern. "The biggest killer in this country is malaria. And now with resistant strains we could be in big trouble. Malaria rates as a more important news story because it covers every Papua New Guinean in the country" (Philemon, 1999). The desire to place greater emphasis on malaria does not match press coverage of the disease. The author chose 1998 in the Post-Courier to look at the number of articles on malaria. Surprisingly, only two appeared. When questioned about this discrepancy, Philemon(1999) replied that health stories were important but the lack of trained health reporters prevented proper coverage of the various diseases that affect PNG. "It's not a question of not wanting to cover health stories; it's a question of man power" (Philemon, 1999).

Solomon (1999), managing editor of The Independent, agrees about the need to give greater priority to stories on malaria. "Malaria affects more people and therefore should receive wider coverage than AIDS, which no doubt will affect more people in the future"

(Solomon, 1999). Table 8.1 reveals that 19 out of 25 editors throughout the South Pacific (76 per cent), thought malaria was a more important health issue than HIV/AIDS. It is amazing that HIV/AIDS has been on the increase in many South Pacific countries for well over a decade and yet just over two-thirds of the editors interviewed in 1998 and 1999 did not regard HIV/AIDS as an issue that deserved greater priority than malaria. This is despite the fact that HIV/AIDS has the potential to wipe out a significant section of the population.

The shortage of health reporters is a real problem in PNG. Ennio Kuble, a journalist with The National, is the only full-time health reporter in PNG. Apart from the lack of health reporters, all the newspapers surveyed in PNG, except The Independent, had removed their weekly health page. Philemon (1999) explained why the Post-Courier decided to remove it: "We dropped it because there was hardly any advertising. It was a sponsored page" (Philemon, 1999). There are no plans to restart the section. Apart from the lack of advertisers, Philemon (1999) argues that it is difficult to maintain a health page without a health reporter.

We do not have a full-time health reporter but there is someone who tries to cover that area. Unfortunately, she's in hospital herself right now. We just do not have enough reporters. We barely have enough for the political and sports stories. And what's more, you need senior journalists to tackle a story like AIDS. But they don't stay long and leave when they find a better paid job (Philemon, 1999).

Philemon(1999) readily admits that politics and sports are "hotter topics" and states that "many of our readers would like to see sports stories on every page. Yet we try to focus on those issues that touch Papua New Guineans in their day to day lives such as politics and the local economy" (Philemon, 1999). The Independent, meanwhile, decided to restart the newspaper's health section in March 1999 after

an absence of three years. Solomon (1999) quoted the lack of advertising for its earlier removal and that “for a long time we did not have a full-time reporter covering health. Now we have a reporter and we’ve created a page for her” (Solomon, 1999). It was noted in chapter 7 that the re-introduction of this health section had an immediate impact on the number of health stories reported (Table 7.12). For example, throughout 1998, five news stories appeared on HIV/AIDS, four of which were printed on World AIDS Day (1 December 1998). When the health page reappeared in March 1999 there were five stories in that same month. The author discovered that in early April 2000 the health page was removed after three previous editions of the newspaper failed to include any news stories concerning health issues.

Commercial considerations entered the equation when deciding whether to report or omit a story on HIV/AIDS. “I would love to promote AIDS and escalate its coverage but we’re not here to sell a newspaper about AIDS” (Kolma, 1999a). Aware of commercial pressures, Solomon(1999) points to the need for interesting but non-threatening stories about HIV/AIDS.

When people here in PNG first heard about HIV/AIDS, it was seen as a foreign disease or linked to prostitutes or drug addicts. It didn’t really touch the ordinary man and woman. Now we need to smash these myths. Women are getting it heterosexually. But how do we package the story in way that does not turn people off and say: ‘Oh that boring old stuff again’. We need to find innovative ways to capture their attention (Solomon, 1999).

As stated in chapter 7, press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG was frequently restricted to the latest figures from the health department together with reports on national and local workshops (Tables 7. 13 and Table 7.15).

According to Kolma (1999a), there is a need “to lift the importance of HIV/AIDS because up until now AIDS has been all about

boring facts and figures which hide people from the real situation" (Kolma (1999a)). This approach was described by Ratzan (1993) as the "pampering factor". Ratzan (1993) states that editors in North America pampered their readers by presenting information on HIV/AIDS in "non-involving, neutral and objective forms that a receiver could easily avoid" (Ratzan, ,1993: 184). Kolma (1999a) believes his newspaper could do more especially in trying to remove misconceptions and indifference about the disease.

The first step for us is to break down the wall of indifference, thinking it is somebody's else problem with an 'I-can't-catch-it' attitude. This is the mental attitude that is providing a blockade to stopping the spread. The message can only be effective when the myth that 'I-cant-get-it' is removed (Kolma (1999b)).

Kolma (1999b) suggests that one way to confront the current apathy about HIV/AIDS among the PNG population is to put a human face on the problem.

We need someone with AIDS to come forward and suffer the shame that such exposure would bring. It would tear down the wall of indifference. Instead, we've been running figures since we began reporting this story four years ago. It seems not to make much difference. What we need are some dramatic examples. But people are shy and ashamed and will not come forward. If we could get them to share their experiences this would make a difference (Kolma , 1999b).

Kolma (1999a) revealed that it took three years before The National found a person who was willing to talk about living with HIV/AIDS. Since the first case of HIV in PNG in 1987, putting a face to the disease has been shelved because of the shame associated with the illness. Although Kolma (1999a) claims that some prominent political and sports figures in PNG have died of AIDS, the cause of death remains hidden.

AIDS is known but we are not making it public. Some of our political leaders have died of AIDS and some prominent sports people. For their memory and to avoid any sense of shame, we have kept it secret. There may be some wisdom in that but it stops getting the message across (Kolma, 1999a).

According to Kolma (1999a), news stories on HIV/AIDS will reach the front page only if they can be presented as a dramatic and sensational story. As editor of The National, Kolma (1999a) explained how the newspaper printed its first front page story on HIV/AIDS (5 December 1998). An elderly man in Lae, PNG's second largest city, said he was cured of AIDS after taking some herbal medicine.

I knew the medicine would not work but it was a good story and it sure sold the newspapers that day. I think we were a little irresponsible because there was no medical evidence to suggest the virus had gone from his system. In fact he died a few days later. May be we should have done a story on his death but we didn't (Kolma, 1999a).

Likewise, Philemon (1999), editor of the Post-Courier, related a similar sensationalist approach.

Attempting to interview HIV/AIDS victims is a problem. We succeeded only once and it took nearly a month to set up the interviews. I initiated this story because I was concerned we were just reporting statistics after statistics. I mean this way you do not get the message over to people and anyway, people do not understand what they mean. To them it's just a set of figures. This story needed a very senior reporter. We asked a health official to put us in touch with one or two victims. Then some days later we were told about a married couple living with AIDS who were at the hospital. They were willing to talk. I just wanted the victims to tell their story. No one had ever done this type of story before. I remember that it was the talk of the town the whole weekend. It was a real scoop. But I must admit, we haven't followed up on this interview. I'm sure if we try we could get another interview (Philemon, 1999).

For Philemon (1999) this HIV/AIDS story was "sensational enough" to be inserted on the front page. This desire for a dramatic angle might

explain why from 1987 -1999, only five HIV/AIDS stories were considered sufficiently 'dramatic' to make the front page of the Post-Courier.

The overall impression gathered by the author from the interviewees in PNG was that the majority of editors had never really reflected on the issue or discussed it. There seemed to be a basic lack of knowledge about the disease. Kolma (1999a) explained how some editors in PNG remained unconvinced and subsequently unconcerned about the threat of HIV/AIDS for a considerable length of time.

It's true that we under-estimated the presence of AIDS. At first we associated AIDS with the developed nations of the world even though it could have started in Africa. Anyway, it seemed a long way off. When it reached Australia it seemed only homosexuals and drug users were the only victims. So we thought AIDS could hardly spread widely in PNG. So there were many myths circulating about the disease. Probably editors have hidden behind their ignorance and relied too heavily on what was given without making an informed decision. Besides, we can only report from the boundary of our knowledge. I'm not satisfied with my current knowledge of HIV. Perhaps because I haven't taken time to look at it. I'm stuck at this desk, smack in the middle of a lot of problems. I presume this is the same for my fellow editors (Kolma , 1999a).

Mixed together with this ignorance and lack of reflection are various levels of prejudice and judgemental language such as use of the term 'victim' by some PNG editors. This suggests certain people are 'innocent' and others 'guilty'. Tables 7. 17 and 7.18 reveal the use of such terms in the headlines of both The National and Post-Courier.

Moreover, HIV/AIDS was seen by many editors in PNG as self-inflicted by people who acted irresponsibly. Kolma (1999a) asserts that this attitude prevented a quicker and more consistent response to the emerging HIV/AIDS epidemic within the country. Kolma (1999a) goes even further and pinpoints the culprits: "We know that AIDS is spread primarily in this country by sexual promiscuity and so you could say AIDS

is self-inflicted" (Kolma (1999a)). Some researchers warn editors against pointing the finger of blame at only certain risk-groups in society because this creates an unnecessary 'moral panic' among the general public (Watney, 1987; Treichler, 1989; Patton, 1990; Nelkin, 1991 and Lupton, 1994). 'Moral panic', a term first coined by Cohen (1972), is created by the sensationalist reporting of inaccurate and confusing language and by the consistent linking of the HIV/AIDS epidemic only to deviant groups (Nelkin 1991b: 304). Kotulak (199) highlights a significant amount of stereotyping with this kind of 'narrow-casting'. Instead of defining HIV/AIDS as a serious public health threat that could be transmitted through sexual and drug-related activities, some editors frame the epidemic as a problem limited to certain risk groups and therefore not worth much attention in the mainstream press. Nearly all the 10 newspaper editors interviewed in PNG did not deny that their early news reports on HIV/AIDS tended towards this type of 'narrow-casting'. This is supported by the content of newspaper cuttings in the PNG press from 1987-1997 (Table 7.1, Table 7.2, Table 7.3 and Table 7.4).

Meanwhile, worried by the widespread existence of sexual promiscuity in PNG, Kolma (1999a) predicts a large upsurge in HIV/AIDS cases.

AIDS will spread because I know the social conditions for an epidemic are well and truly here. Sexual promiscuity is so endemic here and this is coupled with our inability to detect AIDS in any person until they become sick. And in Port Moresby, Lae, Mount Hagen and Rabaul there's so much prostitution. That frightens me and that's why, make no mistake of it, the threat of an epidemic is right here (Kolma, 1999a).

Ironically, despite such free and uncontrolled sexual behaviour, Kolma (1999a) insists there is a high degree of ignorance about sexual matters among the population.

People are not educated on sexual matters from an early age and so it becomes difficult to talk about sex and about a problem that is sex-related. This is true not just for AIDS but also for STDs. And I would say the prime source of infection here in PNG is casual sex between men and women. Many young people feel completely free to experiment with sex from an early age. What makes the situation all the more serious in PNG is that not using condoms has become among many PNG men a mark of masculinity, a macho rite of passage. Using condoms is totally uncool. And I presume many who do this probably have AIDS as well as their partners (Kolma (1999a)).

Informing people about the risks of contracting HIV through unprotected sexual intercourse is difficult since discussion of sex is still regarded as a taboo subject.

Matters related to sexual behaviour are rarely discussed in public because sex is regarded as a taboo subject and in my view this is the major reason why AIDS is not discussed. What seems to be true is that discussion of sex between parents and children is widely seen as indecent. Traditionally there has been little discussion between husband and wife. And the link between AIDS and illicit sex in the mind of many people means that announcing an AIDS victims in the family is like shouting their illicit sex to the world (Solomon, 1998).

In order to reinforce this point, the author found it difficult to find any editor who felt comfortable discussing cultural influences that outlaw talk about HIV/AIDS and sexually related activities. But culture does have a definite influence on attitudes towards life and especially illness. The problem in PNG is that there are so many ethnic groups with their own distinctive cultural traditions and languages that it is only possible to make extremely general statements about cultural influences. Yet it is an area of research that needs to be undertaken in order to further understand the difficulty of reporting HIV/AIDS in countries like PNG.

Religion is another area that has influenced thinking on HIV/AIDS in PNG. Generally, according to Solomon (1998), there is no major distinction between good fortune and good health or between misfortune and illness. They are usually caused by gods and ancestral spirits and other types of magic.

The gods and ancestors cause illness to show disapproval or to remind us that some type of corrective action needs to be done. This affects the way people see HIV/AIDS because they believe nothing is strictly incurable. Even if traditional and modern medicines are ineffective, there is still hope for a cure if those causing the disease can be in some way placated and appeased. And so there's no need to fear the disease if the person who is sick has not provoked or annoyed the spirit. The fact that AIDS might be caused by witchcraft or sorcery can easily lead people to ignore or even discuss it. Yes, these are dangerous forces wielded by dangerous people (Solomon, 1998).

Since incurable diseases ultimately tend to be categorised as socially or supernaturally caused, people have an added incentive to push the fatal cause of HIV/AIDS from their minds. This may go some way to explaining the apparent fatalistic acceptance of HIV/AIDS and a certain disregard or even recklessness in attitude to it. This is described as predestination but it is a complex area that requires further study and explanation.

Other obstacles that prevent open debate and discussion of HIV/AIDS include the lack of confidentiality and the stigma attached to someone living with HIV/AIDS.

People are still ashamed of the AIDS and STDs. They prefer not to talk about it. Anyway, PNG is a small place and people tend to talk a lot and so news gets out quickly. We call this the coconut wire and it is much more powerful and believed than the press. Because of this, people hesitate to share what they think or feel especially because of the stigma attached to the disease. People do ostracise others if it is known they have HIV (Solomon, 1999).

Editors in PNG believe that despite these hindrances the press still has a duty to inform and educate the public about HIV/AIDS especially with information on ways to prevent contracting the disease. "People need to behave more responsibly and I suppose that is where we can help prevent the disease spreading by frequent updates on preventive action" (Kolma (1999a). Philomen(1999) agrees that this contribution from the press is essential and encourages a special focus on young people.

The press has a big role in educating people particularly how to prevent getting it. We need to get messages to young people. The frightening thing is that it is affecting young people (Philemon, 1999).

This section on PNG ends with excerpts from an editorial (3 April 2000) in The National newspaper in which the editor stresses that the way to improve the press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG is to shift from pampering and protecting people, which has limited news reports to statistics, seminars and workshops. Instead the time has come to put a human face on the disease and include mobilising information (MI) - messages that allow people to adopt precautionary practices and use particular preventive means to avoid HIV infection.

It is about time the media reflected the true scenario of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the lives of individuals. The media is now challenged to refocus its reporting from statistics, workshops, seminars, government initiatives and the efforts of churches and non-government organisations to the daily endurance of the patients and their positive response to their state of being. There is more to this scourge of our times than the mere reporting of statistics, seminars and workshops. The approach we must now take is to give a human face to those statistics that we report. We see it as our role to acquaint our people with the facts about the disease and prepare them to live and cope with HIV/AIDS (Kolma, 2000).

Kolma (2000) urges fellow editors and journalists in PNG to adopt a more positive tone in news reports on HIV/AIDS so that:

They can help erase the image of AIDS sufferers as demons painted in our minds. It is now time to highlight the courageousness of individuals as well as to report explicitly the state of health that they are in. Hiding them away from the general community can only lead to the general perception that HIV is a disease that belongs to marginalised people (Kolma, 2000).

8.2 Editors in Fiji

In Fiji, the author interviewed eight editors from five newspapers and three magazines between July 1998 and March 1999. While the number of HIV/AIDS in Fiji remains low, it is acknowledged the figure is considerably higher than the reported estimate of 56 HIV/AIDS cases and that the disease is beginning to spread extensively throughout the country (UNDP: 1999). Chew (1999), former editor of Fiji's newest daily newspaper, The Fiji Sun, argues that while the HIV/AIDS situation in Fiji warrants serious consideration, the general public is not interested in discussing the issue.

Here in Fiji we have not yet seen AIDS explode like it did in Africa. But it is a huge disease in our country, much larger than malaria or malnutrition. The problem is that people do not want to talk about it. A lot of people associate it with sex and death. So they don't want to deal with it. Heart disease is much easier to talk about (Chew, 1999).

Suva, the commercial capital of Fiji, is also home to the largest gay community in the country. This factor, states the editor of Fiji's Sunday Post, is another reason for the delayed public response to the problem.

I think people did not realise how serious it was in the beginning. At first it was seen as a gay disease and then a heterosexual one. It's taken time to catch on because there is a substantial gay community in Fiji and I suppose people thought it was only the gays who had it (Moala, 1999).

The invisibility of the disease contributes to a lack of urgency. Robert Keith Reid, managing editor of Island Business magazine, argues that in the early 1990s, HIV/AIDS cases were rarely seen and this lulled people into a false sense of security. Subsequently, the editor believes there was no change in sexual behaviour and policy makers were not convinced that there was a problem to control.

I suppose until it becomes critical, it is hard for politicians to acknowledge and accept that there is a political imperative to intervene. And the people do not really believe it. The numbers are so small and they say they will be OK, there won't be an epidemic (Reid, 1998).

This lack of interest by both the government and the public concerning HIV/AIDS is reflected in the editorial approach of Islands Business towards the disease. "We cover it when it is worth running as news story or a leader. Yes, we could do more but people don't really believe it" (Reid, 1998). These remarks reveal a certain ambivalent attitude towards reporting the disease, and they expose a common tension that exists for editors when they have to decide between being led by public opinion or informing public debate.

Reid (1998) believes the role of the press is to act as the 'fourth estate', which watches and constantly offers a critical evaluation of government policy and action. But it is difficult for the press in Fiji to fulfil its 'watchdog' role because "there is no real investigative reporting and that's because there is a lack of resources and manpower. Few journalists are specialised enough to cover serious issues" (Reid, 1998). Moala (1999), editor of Fiji's Sunday Post also points to lack of knowledge among journalists as a reason for sensational and inaccurate coverage of HIV/AIDS in Fiji's press.

AIDS is tackled as if it was just another news story. It's just an isolated event that does not have a continuous pattern. Journalists want names and addresses and to know who's got it and where do they live. It's written in a way that makes it sound horrific and this just increases stigma and isolation. No wonder medical people do not trust journalists with the facts (Moala, 1999).

Research has shown that lack of properly trained health reporters does limit the content and scope of reporting. "With very few exceptions, journalists do not have the specialist knowledge in the field they report on and as a result they can easily distort the overall picture of the AIDS epidemic (Nelkin, 1987: 59). Lack of training creates a situation where journalists who report on HIV/AIDS "pay too much selective attention to particular types of evidence compared to others or simply get it wrong" (Wellings: 1983).

Initially Lomas (1999), editor of Islands Business, was convinced that HIV/AIDS would not spread beyond the circle of prostitutes and drug users in Fiji's major urban areas. Lomas (1999) claims that for some considerable period of time, this viewpoint was not an uncommon attitude among other editors in Fiji. It led to biased stereotyping where the epidemic was framed as a problem of 'prostitutes, gays and druggies' and therefore not worth much attention in the mainstream press. The editor, however, found his views on HIV/AIDS seriously challenged after a visit to Tahiti in December 1998 to attend the annual meeting of the Pacific Island News Association (PINA). During the conference a Tahitian journalist, Marie Bopp, announced that she was living with the HIV virus.

When Marie broke her story it was major breakthrough. It was the first time editors were reached and touched. In fact, I saw a substantial shift with the editors because here was someone who was known and who came from the islands. She was real and not anonymous. It's the classic story of someone providing a breakthrough (Lomas, 1999).

Lomas (1999) claims that the Tahitian journalist dramatically influenced his perception of the disease. "It no longer appears as being a problem 'out there' but more about something existing in the community" (Lomas 1999). The editor of The National in PNG expressed a similar view after meeting some people living with HIV/AIDS. Yet, this shift in understanding does not always translate into more informed and wider coverage of the disease. HIV/AIDS and other health issues have to compete with popular topics such as politics and sport. "There is much bigger pressure to report on politics than health. Overall health issues are not well covered but it's not a question of ill will or disinformation. Some topics just sell better" (Lomas, 1999).

Hunter (1999), former editor of Fiji's oldest and largest daily newspaper, The Fiji Times, believes HIV/AIDS is not yet a serious threat to Fiji and therefore does not warrant a great deal of coverage.

We do not have an editorial policy but if AIDS could be shown to be the disaster it is alleged to be, then I might adopt one. Till now we've covered it as just another news story and then we move on. The preference here is for event-based stories rather than process and follow-up ones. Besides we don't want to bore our readers or to blunt the message by saturation coverage. We use AIDS as a sort of filler (Hunter, 1999).

According to Hunter (1999), certain news values such as 'lack of ambiguity' and 'numerical superiority' play a significant part in deciding whether news items on HIV/AIDS are selected or omitted.

We want to deal with an actual disaster rather than a potential one like AIDS. There is a lack of tangibility and certainty about how AIDS will unfold. Diabetes is a much bigger problem and it's happening now before our very eyes. More people are affected with it and thousands die from it in Fiji. Numerically, it is a far more immediate problem. UNAIDS and others connected with AIDS are unable to put their hands on their hearts and say what the exact figure is (Hunter, 1999).

Mayer (1968) describes this as 'the quantitative view of importance'. "The greater the number of people affected by an event the greater the importance of the event and hence the higher its news-value (Mayer, 1968: 89).

The replies by editors in Table 8.1 support the claim that other medical conditions such as diabetes, heart diseases and strokes were regarded by some editors as far more newsworthy than HIV/AIDS because of the visible impact they exert on the daily lives of the people. "The biggest threats here are lifestyle diseases such as heart attacks or strokes. The figures are low for AIDS and so we put it in the same category as a routine health story" (Moala 1999). Another obstacle when reporting on HIV/AIDS, especially an attempt to put a human face on the problem, is the lack of confidentiality, which prevents people from wanting to reveal their HIV/AIDS status. This factor, combined with discrimination and stigma attached to the disease, makes it extremely difficult to cover the story about anyone living with the virus or AIDS. Foster-Hidebrand (1999), editor of Pacific Islands Monthly, describes the problem.

People do not want to talk about this disease. They know it's got some link with promiscuous sex. And with Fiji being such a small place with many islands, it's easy for rumours to start and spread. If you're in any way linked to AIDS then people will shun you and your family. That's why people keep quiet (Foster-Hidlebrand, 1999).

Only one editor in Fiji openly acknowledged that cultural thinking and practices were a significant hindrance when reporting HIV/AIDS. "For us it's a difficult story to cover because of the cultural taboos when talking about anything to do with sex" (Moala, 1999). As in PNG, the editors in Fiji felt uncomfortable to discuss cultural taboos (Table 8.2). Despite this hesitancy to discuss possible cultural influences on press

reports of HIV/AIDS, it would distort the overall picture to underestimate cultural and religious influences upon peoples' understanding and response to HIV/AIDS in many South Pacific countries. The aspects of cultural and religious influences need further research and debate.

Meanwhile, Foster-Hildebrand (1999) thinks there is a change in attitude in both the government and the public.

Government is beginning to accept the reality of AIDS. For a long time they did not think it was a large enough problem. And with all the unwanted pregnancies and STD's, people are slowly being forced to use these terms in their conversation (Foster-Hildebrand, 1999).

Lomas (1999) believes the press needs to change its approach and use greater initiative in reporting HIV/AIDS instead of relying solely on facts and figures.

Before there were too many statistics and so AIDS became something of a faceless story. We need to use human terms and people instead of anonymous facts. Our newspaper readers are drawn towards the human side of the story. And that's the way forward: to tell the story in human terms (Lomas, 1999).

Meanwhile, the deputy editor of the Daily Post prefers the sensationalist approach "We report only the cases we know. If there is a victim with AIDS who will speak up or if someone dies from AIDS, then we do a story" (Koroi, 1998). Piot (1999), executive head of UNAIDS, warns against adopting such a wait-and-see attitude.

The South Pacific is very vulnerable and it is where Africa was about ten years ago. The lesson from Africa is not to wait till you have 10, 15, 20, 25 per cent of the population infected before you start to act. The key is how to make peoples, nations, communities act before more people start dying of AIDS. The main concern for the press in the Pacific should not be the current low numbers or the lack of alarm from the public but that the problem is already in their countries and that it is spreading.

One hopes that South Pacific countries will not wait until people start dying in massive numbers before responding with a vigour that is necessary (Piot, 1999a).

8.3 Polynesia: Samoa and Tonga.

Samoa

Formerly known as Western Samoa, Samoa is a small independent country located towards the centre of the South Pacific Ocean and has a population of 163,000 (Andrews, 1997). It has five newspapers. The Savali is government-owned while the rest are under private ownership. These include Newsline which is bilingual and publishes twice a week; The Samoan which publishes in Samoan and appears twice weekly; the Samoa Observer publishes four times a week and finally the Sunday Samoan (Malifa, 1998). The author interviewed Savea Sano Malifa, a journalist with more than 20 years experience in Samoa; he is editor and publisher of the two largest selling and most popular newspapers in the country, the Samoa Observer and the Sunday Samoan.

Politics dominates the news in Samoa. This reached fever pitch in 1999 with the political assassination of a cabinet minister and the subsequent trial. The government's refusal to allow the opposition any airtime on Samoa's sole television network sparked another endless round of political intrigue and in-fighting. Then the scandal over the illegal sale of passports to foreigners in Washington, Hong Kong, Tonga, American Samoa and even Samoa itself resulted in further political recriminations that dragged on for months. With this type of news so readily available and of interest to the public, Malifa (1998) found it difficult to report HIV/AIDS.

We've enough hot topics and besides AIDS does not really exist in the public mind at the moment. People have never seen it and so they do not know what it is like. We've only nine or ten cases here so it's hardly an epidemic. We do cover it from time to time. Anyway, we've limited resources to spend on health stories (Malifa, 1998).

As a result of this viewpoint, the editor has not printed any editorials on HIV/AIDS in either the Samoa Observer or the Sunday Samoan. Malifa (1998) admits that this may change in the future if the number of HIV/AIDS cases increases. For now other health issues take priority. "Malaria is all over the islands. There is a lot to do to inform people about the dangers for them and their children. I think this type of illness must be reported first" (Malifa, 1998).

The absence of a trained health reporter on the Samoa Observer and the Sunday Samoan and the removal of the health page does, according to Malifa (1998), hinder coverage of important health issues like HIV/AIDS. "We work with a small staff and minimal resources. May be if we had the right numbers we could do more stories on health" (Malifa, 1998). Then there is the problem of public perception of HIV/AIDS.

Somehow AIDS is seen as being related to illegal sex and people are scared to talk about it. This is because the pastors on Sunday whip up fear about being faithful and how God will punish them if they disobey his commandments. I suppose we know this and may be we're reflecting their fear by avoiding the story (Malifa, 1998).

Cultural traditions together with Christian religious practices and beliefs play a major role in South Pacific populations (Layton 1998). Samoa is no exception. "Churches have considerable influence in this country and they do not like their people to talk of condoms or other explicit language" (Malifa, 1998). The editor, however, felt unable to assess the influence and impact of the Christian churches in regard to

peoples' attitudes towards HIV/AIDS in Samoa. This is why further research that examines the influence of religion and culture on HIV/AIDS is essential for improving the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in the South Pacific

Apart from the acknowledged influence of culture and religion on HIV/AIDS among the Samoan population, Malifa (1998) doubts whether the press in Samoa can contribute towards influencing public understanding of HIV/AIDS. The editor argues that knowledge of the disease among fellow editors is woefully inadequate. "I can't say that I'm happy with what I know about the disease and I wouldn't be surprised if some of the other editors knew less than me. It's not a topic that we talk about. This ultimately reflects in our coverage which I admit has been patchy and not always accurate." (Malifa, 1998). The editor claims it would be helpful if the health department was not so reluctant to share information about the disease.

According to Malifa (1998), government pressure is exerted on the editor and staff at the government-owned Savali newspaper to present a positive picture of Samoa and its politicians. "You have to understand the landscape of the local media. Politicians give orders to government-controlled media about what to avoid. They do not want to upset the community" (Malifa, 1999). Public discussion of HIV/AIDS is not encouraged. "Tourism is a vital industry here. It's a core plank of the economy. Allowing AIDS in the media would really interfere with the image the government wants to portray. I think that's why there's probably even less news on AIDS in Savali" (Malifa, 1998).

It was difficult for the author to establish the accuracy of these statements since the editor of Savali was unavailable to do an interview about press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Samoa. Yet, the way the government has squashed reports on other sensitive issues in Savali,

such as the near-bankruptcy of the scandal-ridden government-owned airline and the illegal passport fiasco (Asana, 1998), means it would not sound implausible if restrictions had been placed upon the reporting of HIV/AIDS. Further investigations, however, are needed in order to verify the accuracy of Malifa's views on this matter.

Tonga,

Tonga, a small South Pacific nation of just under 98,000 people, has three main weekly newspapers: The Chronicle, which is government-owned, the church-run Taumu'a Lelei and the first non-government, non-church weekly newspaper Taimi O' Tonga which was started in 1989. The figures for HIV/AIDS are low in Tonga (Appendix 20) with just under 15 cases. These figures, however, do not include infection rates among the sizeable Tongan communities in Auckland (the largest Polynesian city in the world) and Los Angeles which number nearly 60,000 (Andrews, 1997). The author interviewed Kalafi Moala, editor of Tonga's largest and recent newspaper, Taimi O'Tonga. The editor of The Chronicle refused to be interviewed while the editor of Taumu'a Lelei was not in the country.

Moala (1998) explained that while the first HIV case in Tonga was diagnosed in 1990 the figures have remained low .

I'm convinced that AIDS does exist even though the latest figures from the health department don't show it to be a problem as yet. But it's only now that some organisations are beginning to speak out. We keep tabs on it but it's so hard to verify the real figure and to get information about AIDS (Moala, 1998).

As in Samoa. no Tongan newspaper has an editorial policy on the disease, there are no trained health reporters and there is no health page. "If we had better resources I'm sure we would print more stories .

I think we know that unless we act quickly this AIDS disease will really hit us hard. But it's difficult to do much without manpower" (Moala, 1998).

As with Malifa (1999) in Samoa, Moala (1998) mentioned that cultural traditions and religion were "extremely influential forces" in Tongan society. The editor, however, was unable to offer an assessment of their impact.

Here everyone goes to church on Sunday and the place is like a ghost town. But I don't think any of the pastors ever talk about AIDS. I think it's too embarrassing to mention it because it's linked to sex and sex is not something you talk about here even in private. So it's hard to know how much religion has stopped discussion of it or whether culture just makes people feel ill at ease with the subject. Probably it's a combination of both (Moala, 1998).

The author has maintained throughout this chapter that further research about the way culture and religion shape peoples' impression and reaction to HIV/AIDS would provide useful data for those trying to improve awareness of HIV/AIDS among South Pacific populations.

While Moala (1998) denies any government pressure to avoid printing news reports on HIV/AIDS, the editor admitted that commercial considerations had a direct influence on the overall approach to covering the disease. "We're in the business of making money. That comes first. Sales were affected by 20 per cent after we ran one story on AIDS. It seems people condemned the language used. It was too up front" (Moala, 1998). The editor was referring to use of the word "condom" in one news report. "We just have to move slowly on this one and appreciate that the public is not ready yet for this type of language. I think our people are basically very conservative" Moala, 1998).

8.4 New Caledonia and Tahiti.

Both New Caledonia and Tahiti are French overseas territories. New Caledonia has a population of 165,000, of which nearly a half are French Melanesians while more than 80 per cent of the Tahitian population (188,000) are French Polynesians (Andrews, 1997). While the figures for HIV infections in both countries appear to be low (New Caledonia had under 200 HIV cases while Tahiti has 181 (Appendix 20), they do account for the largest number of infections in the South Pacific after PNG. A doctor in Tahiti who did not want to be named doubted whether the current figures represent only those who live in the two French territories or other French citizens who have come to the region recently after being infected in other countries. This is because treatment for HIV/AIDS is available for all French citizens.

The author joined the two countries together because they share a situation which did not exist in other South Pacific countries; exposure to French television coverage of HIV/AIDS which began in the mid 1980s and reached a peak by 1988. Didier Fleaux (1998), editor of Les Nouvelles Caledoniennes, the largest selling daily newspaper in New Caledonia, describes coverage of HIV/AIDS on French Television in the late 1980s.

It was like being in France. We got the same French news from Paris on our TV2 channel. With AIDS we had plenty of information especially around World AIDS Day (*1 December*). French TV had up to 20 hours of programmes about AIDS. Most of them were fund raisers with some short documentaries. Well those days have gone and we're lucky if you get 2 hours now (Fleaux, 1998).

Alex du Prel (1998), editor of Tahiti's largest selling magazine, Tahiti Pacifique, describes how television was widely available and popular in New Caledonia during the late 1980s.

I would say that even at the end of the 1980s, 99 per cent of households had access to television. And it had more impact than the press because it could reach the masses in a visual way. Now this is important because here in Tahiti it's an oral and visual culture. Tahitians are not readers (Du Prel, 1998).

Du Prel (1998) argues that aggressive HIV/AIDS campaigns on French television in the late 1980s alerted Tahitians to the potential serious health threat of HIV/AIDS. These education campaigns conveyed important information about the disease and, according to Du Prel (1998), may have initially contained the spread of the disease.

The awareness campaigns on French television were a little frightening and people used to talk a lot about them. At first I think they had a real impact on people's attitudes because they linked AIDS with death. But it's hard to say how long the impact lasted. But at least people knew what AIDS was and how to prevent getting it (Du Prel, 1998).

By the early 1990s coverage of HIV/AIDS on French television and in the French press had declined significantly from its peak in the late 1980s. This reflected what happened with media, and in particular the press, in other parts of the world such as in Britain and the United States. This pattern, described by Downs (1972) as the issue-attention cycle - the rise, peak and decline of media interest in a disease - created, according to Du Prel (1998), a lack of interest in Tahiti about the topic because the local media was heavily reliant on news from France.

People here lost interest in AIDS when the French television decided to drop AIDS. Now there's not much coverage on the television or in the press. We concentrate on other diseases like dengue fever which is really widespread. When there is no event we don't often think about AIDS. Usually we do two or three articles before World AIDS Day and then may be the same afterwards (Du Prel, 1998).

A similar sentiment was expressed by Gilles Marsauche, editor of Tahiti's largest selling church magazine, Vea Pontetant. This magazine is popular among the large Protestant population in Tahiti. "We covered the AIDS story about 10 years ago. We had figures and it was spelt out very clearly. Nothing was hidden. I must say we hardly ever write about it now. I mean people already know all about it (Marsauche, 1998). By 1991 in New Caledonia, the largest daily newspaper Les Nouvelles Caledoniennes had removed its weekly column on HIV /AIDS.

For two years (1989 -1991) the paper had a half page, four column section once a week on AIDS. People shared their real experiences and others sent in letters. As far as I know it was stopped because the mail was decreasing. I think people were not really interested in the project (Fleaux, 1998).

There are no plans to restart the column or the health page that folded in 1994. Press coverage of HIV/AIDS is now limited to a few news stories around World AIDS Day and "if there is some major breakthrough with a vaccine or cure" (Fleaux, 1998).

Unlike other South Pacific countries such as Samoa, editors in New Caledonia and Tahiti were not restricted in their use of terms like 'sexual intercourse' or 'condoms'. Consequently, information in the press on preventive measures was clear and direct.

We told the people exactly what to do if they wanted to avoid contamination. There was no pressure to omit phrases that had a sexual connotation. They used them on the television. So these words were not new or offensive to people (Fleaux 1998).

However, for editors in Samoa it was seen as culturally insensitive to use a word like condom. "The first time we used the word condom we had dozens of letters complaining about falling standards and corrupting the people" (Malifa, 1998). As a result the editor of the

Samoa Observer said the newspaper steers clear of printing information on the use of certain methods to prevent infection.

8.5 Micronesia

The author interviewed Janet David, assistant editor of Islands Tribune in Pohnpei, the capital of Micronesia. The editor was away in Guam. Pohnpei has a population of 35,000 and is the largest centre of the four islands that make up the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), (Chuuk, Yap, Pohnpei and Kosrae). Islands Tribune with a circulation of 1200 copies is the only newspaper in the country. However, people in Pohnpei and the adjacent islands have access to the Guam Tribune, the main newspaper from the US overseas territory of Guam which has a circulation figure of 22,000. FSM has recorded only two cases of HIV with two people living with AIDS. Meanwhile, UNAIDS (1999) states that FSM is on the verge of a significant spread in HIV infections.

Officially there's only two cases but it's more like 35 which if you add a zero for each new case discovered that translates into 350 which is high for a population of only 35,000. We believe a number of those infected have left for Guam. The increase in STDs and the opening of two new brothels down by the port does not help (Piot 1999b).

Since 1987, when the newspaper was only a newsletter, until 1997 when the paper came under new ownership, Islands Tribune has carried only six articles on HIV/AIDS; four foreign and two local stories. Since 1998 the newspaper has printed three stories; two local and one on the front page.

David (1999) believes that people in FSM do not see HIV/AIDS as a problem. "There are rumours that some people might have it but no one talks about it. There was big awareness when one of the islanders

had it in 1990 but that person was shipped off to Guam and it has died down since then.” (David, 1999). The editor knew the Tahitian journalist Marie Bopp and was the first journalist in FSM to put HIV/AIDS on the front page. “A few months ago (1998) I met Marie in Fiji when she was trying to cope with the disease. She was so brave and it gave me courage to come back and write a front page story on AIDS. I hope I can do more”(David, 1999).

David (1999) would like to increase the number of news items on HIV/AIDS in the Islands Tribune but lists some obstacles that prevent such a wish.

It's so difficult to get accurate information. Politicians and health officials seem unwilling to give out information. And there's the fear of confidentiality on a small Island. This makes people close up if the topic comes up for discussion (David, 1999).

The editor thinks culture is another obstacle. “People do not talk or discuss sex. It's a no-go area. So you're stuck when it comes to writing about AIDS. That's why I often leave it to one side.” David (1999) fears that only when more islanders start to fall sick in larger numbers, will the disease be seen as a threat. “Local people don't seem to care about AIDS. It's as if they are saying: 'I cannot catch it.' Yet there's a lot of promiscuity going on around the island and divorce is really high” (David, 1999). Cultural influences upon the way people perceive HIV/AIDS and continued denial in the population are two areas that, according to David (1999), the Islands Tribune could help alleviate.

Our paper may be small but it can, with the right information and government support turn the situation around. At the moment we feel a little vulnerable if we try to do more stories on AIDS. I know we should but for me it's more a question of waiting for the right time (David, 1999).

Conclusion

The majority of newspaper and magazine editors in PNG and Fiji were slow to respond to the serious health threat of HIV/AIDS. They believed malaria rather than HIV/AIDS was far more important in terms of its immediacy and the visibility of its effects. Even now, none of them has an editorial policy on the disease and every editor interviewed by the author openly acknowledged varying degrees of ignorance about HIV/AIDS. All but two of the editors used 'lack of resources' as a major stumbling block for covering the story. For the most part, 'resources' referred to the lack of health reporters which, it was argued, placed a serious limitation on the ability to report the disease. The fact that only eight per cent of the editors had a health page and 16 per cent employed health reporters is probably more indicative of the lack of 'newsworthiness' attributed to health issues by the press in many South Pacific countries.

HIV/AIDS, however, received substantial press coverage when compared with other illnesses such as malaria and heart disease. Yet the lack of editorials and front page news stories indicate that while HIV/AIDS was perceived as newsworthy by the editors in PNG and Fiji, they were, for the most part, unconvinced by the serious health threat posed by the disease. Subsequently, the editors were unwilling to lead public debate on HIV/AIDS for fear of exaggerating its presence and influence.

It was difficult to determine the cultural influences upon editors in their approach to HIV/AIDS. Further research is required on this aspect of the problem. However, it is safe to conclude that there has been a gradual recognition by the editors that the disease, with its potential to inflict widespread damage upon society, is beginning to spread in

both countries and that the press can play a role in conveying information and for some editors, even educational messages. Some editors interviewed by the author in 1998 and again in 1999 had, in the space of one year, shifted from a purely reactive approach - where waiting for information and stories became the norm - to a more proactive stance with a strong determination to go out and get the story and preferably one with a human interest angle. This may be partly due to the announcement in December 1998 by Tahitian journalist Marie Bopp at the annual conference of the Pacific Island News Association (PINA) in Tahiti that she was living with HIV. A number of the editors who attended this meeting claimed the journalist had challenged and ultimately changed their views on the disease.

Findings from Chapter 7 do not indicate a significant breakthrough in the number or content of news items on HIV/AIDS immediately after Bopp's revelations (Table 7.10 and Table 7.11). It took nearly six months for a major HIV/AIDS awareness drive to materialise in the PNG press. This shift in gear was not directly motivated by the Bopp story but by news from the National AIDS Council (NAC) that a series of awareness-building workshops were planned to take place around the country. Several researchers already mentioned in this chapter have argued that press coverage of HIV/AIDS increased in relation to the degree of personal contact with the disease. In the case of Marie Bopp, the author argues that awareness of a person living with HIV did not noticeably influence coverage of HIV/AIDS in the press, at least not in the short-term.

Knowing someone, however, who is living with the disease did make a difference in regard to how seriously the threat of HIV/AIDS was taken by editors. This is true in the case of Kolma (1999a) who remained unconvinced by the threat of HIV/AIDS until he met some people living with HIV/AIDS. From this experience Kolma (1999a)

gradually became a leading voice among other editors in PNG and stressed the need to avoid 'pampering' readers with non-threatening news items on statistics, workshops and seminars. Instead, the editor said the new focus should be on how to prevent infection and find ways to respond to those living with the virus (Kolma (1999a)).

. Malifa (1999), editor of Samoa Observer in Samoa and Moala (1998), editor of Taimi O' Tonga in Tonga, admit there is room for improvement in the reporting of HIV/AIDS in their respective countries. Lack of knowledge about the disease among editors and insufficient staff are two areas that are highlighted by these editors. While religion and culture play a significant role in the daily lives of people in these two Polynesian countries, it was difficult to measure their impact on public perception of HIV/AIDS. This requires further study and research.

However, the inclusion of words like 'condom' or phrases such as 'sexual intercourse' in press reports on HIV/AIDS receive a large number of complaints from readers. This makes it extremely difficult to insert information about particular ways to prevent infection. So far the editors have adopted a reactive approach to reporting the disease. This may change when there is a significant increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases in Tonga and Samoa. When this occurred in PNG, it prompted a growing desire to follow a proactive approach and expand coverage. Unlike Tonga, PNG and Fiji, editors and journalists working for the government-owned newspaper must seek the approval of the ministry of health before publication of news stories on HIV/AIDS.

As French Overseas territories, New Caledonia and Tahiti had the advantage of early exposure to information on HIV/AIDS through French television coverage of the disease which had peaked by 1991. The press in these two territories followed a similar pattern and since the early 1990s, newspaper and magazine editors have limited news

reports of the disease to occasions like World AIDS Day (1 December) or some major breakthrough in medical treatment. While editors interviewed by the author in New Caledonia and Tahiti claim that initially, the French television awareness campaigns had a significant impact on people's attitudes towards the disease, further research is needed to assess the long-term effects of such coverage. There is also the question about the role and effectiveness of the press in countries where television is the dominant media. From the interviews undertaken by the author for this research, it would seem that initially, television coverage of HIV/AIDS outscored the press in both content and impact. And finally, with insufficient staff, finances and virtually no coverage of HIV/AIDS in the weekly Islands Tribune, Micronesia's only local newspaper, local radio and television will need to assist in plugging the information gap on HIV/AIDS.

Chapter 9

Conclusions and Recommendations

The central hypothesis of this thesis stated that press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG during the 1990s repeated the trends and mistakes found in the reporting of HIV/AIDS in the Western press during the 1990s; initially a slow response that framed the disease as limited to certain risk groups, followed by increased coverage with the acknowledgment of risk to the wider heterosexual population. Finally, there was a gradual decrease in the number of news items on HIV/AIDS.

Findings from the quantitative content analysis in Chapter 7 reveal that the press in PNG from 1987-1999, followed this pattern of reporting with variations in timing and emphasis. In the early 1990s the Post-Courier PNG's oldest and largest selling newspaper, concentrated more on HIV/AIDS in other countries than within PNG. This early emphasis that targeted foreigners as the main carriers of the virus, was not repeated by the other three newspapers in this study, The National, The Independent and The Eastern Star. They framed HIV/AIDS primarily as a local rather than a foreign news item. With the gradual realisation that HIV/AIDS was spreading widely throughout the country, there was a significant increase in local news items in both The National and Post-Courier from January 1998 until June 1999. Finally, fewer news items appeared in these two newspapers from July 1999 until December 1999. It is uncertain if this is the beginning of a temporary or permanent decline.

These three distinct stages of reporting resulted in various degrees of stereotyping, sensationalism and complacency. This proved to be an inadequate way to report HIV/AIDS especially since the increasing

rate of HIV infections in a country like PNG did not correspond to the type and frequency of news items. For example, by the end of 1999, there was a decline in the number of news items on HIV/AIDS in the PNG press. This, however, coincided with a significant increase in HIV infections throughout the country.

The author noted throughout this study that the pattern of reporting HIV/AIDS in the Western (United States, Britain, France and Australia) and PNG press closely resembled what Downs (1972) described as the 'issue-attention cycle - the rise, peak and decline of interest by the media in a long-established health issue. Further research is needed to determine if the 'issue-attention' cycle has come full circle and whether it will be repeated in PNG.

HIV/AIDS, however, received substantial press coverage when compared with other illnesses such as malaria and heart disease. Yet, only a few news items referred to people who had died of the disease and this, together with the failure to put a human face of the problem, framed HIV/AIDS as more of a distant theoretical disease rather than an immediate and serious health threat. This finding matched Kasoma's (1990 and 1996) research on press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Zambia and Pitts and Jackson's (1993) research on the same topic in Zimbabwe.

In 1999, The Independent witnessed a significant increase in the number of HIV/AIDS news items, up from five news items in 1998 to 15 in 1999. A likely explanation for this increase was the reintroduction of a health page in March 1999. This rekindled impetus towards reporting the disease. Also, the previous editor was unconvinced by the threat of the disease which most likely contributed to the decline of HIV/AIDS news items from 1996-1998. The National was the only newspaper in

this study that employed a full-time health reporter. This has a definite impact on the number and content of the news items about HIV/AIDS.

The qualitative content analysis of HIV/AIDS news items in The National and Post-Courier in 1998-1999 sought to examine the statement by Singer and Endreny (1987) that the media do not report 'risks' and ways to prevent contracting illness and instead, prefer to concentrate on the harmful effects of diseases such as long-term suffering. The findings from this research show strong agreement with this hypothesis. Twenty six per cent of news items on the harmful effects of HIV/AIDS appeared in The National and Post Courier in 1998 and more than 20 per cent in 1999. In contrast, there were no news items on risk behaviour and ways to prevent HIV infection in 1998 and only five per cent of news items reported risks in 1999.

Reporting in the latter part of 1999 was less sensational with a 'toning down' of stereotyping and stigmatising images. The increase of news items on MI in the latter part of 1999 denotes a shift towards a more positive type of reporting with news items presenting information on how to respond to HIV/AIDS instead of emphasising only the harms and damaging effects of the disease. Likewise, aggressive military metaphors used in several headlines throughout 1999 were replaced towards the end of 1999 with headlines that encouraged people to accept and support those living with HIV/AIDS.

Another important finding from this research concerns the fact that while HIV/AIDS was perceived as newsworthy by the editors in PNG, they were, for the most part, unconvinced during most of the 1990s of the serious health threat posed by the disease. Subsequently, the editors were unwilling to lead public debate on HIV/AIDS for fear of exaggerating its presence and influence. A likely explanation for this

hesitancy to take a stronger editorial lead in the PNG press and elsewhere in the South Pacific was revealed in Chapter 8. Here, interviews with 25 newspaper and magazine editors showed that up until mid-1999, more than 70 per cent of them considered malaria to be a greater and more immediate threat than HIV/AIDS. None of the editors had an editorial policy on the disease despite its potential to inflict enormous damage on the social and economic fabric of many South Pacific countries. Moreover, only 16 per cent of the editors had a health page and 8 per cent employed full-time health reporter (Table 8.2). This is probably more indicative of the lack of 'newsworthiness' attributed to health issues by the press in many South Pacific countries. This finding exposes the need to examine the current status and standard of health reporting in PNG and the South Pacific.

Only a few editors, touched by others who are living with HIV/AIDS, think differently and fear for the future. Some editors, however, interviewed by the author in 1998 and again in 1999 had, in the space of one year, shifted from a purely reactive approach - where waiting for information and stories became the norm - to a more proactive stance with a strong determination to go out and get the story and preferably one with a human interest angle. Many editors readily admitted their ignorance and lack of thought on the topic. Only 12 per cent said they were satisfied with their knowledge of HIV/AIDS (Table 8.2). The lack of trained health reporters was viewed as a stumbling block for future coverage. Despite a general willingness to increase the educational content of news items, the editors, for the most part, remain unconvinced that a HIV/AIDS epidemic will eventuate because of the low numbers of HIV/AIDS cases. Many editors may also be influenced by what Mayer (1968) refers to as the 'quantitative view of importance'.

Various cultural backgrounds (Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian) did not, from the interviews, result in any significant difference among the editors in their approach to HIV/AIDS. Newspaper editors, however, in New Caledonia and Tahiti were exposed to a very different experience compared to their counterparts in PNG, Fiji, Tonga and Micronesia. These editors had the advantage of early exposure to information on HIV/AIDS through French television coverage of the disease which had peaked by 1991. Press coverage of HIV/AIDS in these two French overseas territories followed a similar trend with news items beginning to decline after 1991. While editors interviewed by the author in New Caledonia and Tahiti claim that initially, French television awareness campaigns had a significant impact on peoples attitudes towards the disease, further research is needed to assess the long-term effects of such coverage on attitude and behavioural change.

This research also highlights several areas that need further evaluation and action. **Firstly, the lack of awareness and urgency among the majority of editors in the South Pacific concerning the wider health, social and economic consequences of an HIV/AIDS epidemic need to be addressed.** This is supported by the fact that, despite the presence and spread of HIV/AIDS in the region since 1987, 19 out of 25 editors in 1999 still believed that malaria was a more serious and immediate threat. Yet, in 1996, former Fijian Prime Minister, Sitiveni Rabuka compared HIV/AIDS in PNG and the South Pacific to a dangerously powerful storm that was forming offshore and that there was an urgent need to protect people from its ferocity and harm. That storm has now come ashore and the press can play its part in sheltering people from the damaging effects of the storm by providing essential information and education about the disease. The future of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG and the rest of the South Pacific is dependent on editors deciding to keep HIV/AIDS in the public forum

and by increasing editorial comments so as to lead and inform debate on the issue. This involves further efforts through meetings and workshops to convince the editors that the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the region is in its infancy and that its real impact is yet to occur.

Secondly, traditional news values made it difficult for editors in PNG to view HIV/AIDS as a consistently newsworthy topic. Criteria for selecting news include aspects of sensation, conflict, mystery, celebrity, deviance, tragedy and proximity. While news items on HIV/AIDS fit some of these categories, it is a disease that has been reported by The Independent and Post-Courier since 1987 and this makes it difficult to present it in a constantly new and interesting way. **What is needed, therefore, is a new approach when evaluating the newsworthiness of HIV/AIDS.** This research points to the fact that without a new approach that includes additional news values such as 'emergency public health threat', the press in PNG as well as the Western press will continue to be trapped in the 'issue-attention cycle' - the rise, peak and decline of interest in illnesses such as HIV/AIDS that have a prolonged existence. These three stages of reporting resulted in various degrees of stereotyping, sensationalism and complacency and proved to be an inadequate way to report HIV/AIDS, especially since the increasing rate of HIV infections in a country like PNG did not correspond to the type and frequency of news items. By the end of 1999, there was a decline in news items on HIV/AIDS in the PNG press. This, however, coincided with the beginning of a significant increase in HIV infections throughout the country (Appendix, 30).

Thirdly, greater emphasis on 'harms' rather than 'risks' in the PNG press portrayed a sense of helplessness that there was nothing that could contain the spread of the disease. **The inclusion of MI - news items about how to avoid being infected by a contagious virus like HIV**

- adds a sense of balance by encouraging participation and hope.

The inclusion of MI, however, is closely linked to the educational role of the press which editors agree about in theory but often fail to implement in practice. Currently, coverage of World AIDS Day on 1 December has become a popular slot for inserting news items on MI. But is this common practice sufficient, considering the increasing spread of the epidemic, already more than 20,000 HIV/AIDS cases in PNG? Although it is difficult to calculate the influence of MI on behavioural patterns, its omission removes vital information for challenging risk behaviours.

Fourthly, less emphasis should be placed on sensational language, headlines and military metaphors which tend to exaggerate and distort the reality of HIV/AIDS within PNG. Recommendations from a three-day workshop for editors and journalists in PNG on HIV/AIDS and the role of the media, conducted by the author in Port Moresby from 29 May - 31 May 2000, also stressed the need to **avoid an over-concentration on facts and figures and to include more news items on care and compassion.** Other recommendations from the workshop included a commitment by the editors to increase coverage on the disease, especially editorial comments and the inclusion of more feature and news items on MI.

Fifthly, cultural taboos in regard to the reporting of HIV/AIDS were briefly mentioned in this research especially when discussing such topics as sex and death. **Christian and traditional beliefs in PNG and the South Pacific also influence public perception and understanding of HIV/AIDS.** The majority of editors interviewed by the author were hesitant to discuss these issues and this made it difficult to determine the extent of cultural influences upon editors and journalists in their approach to HIV/AIDS. The author noted that newspaper editors in the French overseas territories of Tahiti and New Caledonia were not

embarrassed to use phrases like 'condom' and 'sexual intercourse' in press reports on HIV/AIDS. This was not the case in countries like Samoa and Fiji that had lived under former British colonial rule. Further research is required to examine cultural differences and obstacles when reporting on HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific. This has important ramifications for the design and implementation of future awareness campaigns in the region.

Finally, this study did not attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of **employing trained health reporters or using a health page to generate more news items on health issues in the PNG press.** However, it was evident from this research that from 1996, the only full-time health reporter in PNG who worked at The National and the only newspaper with a health page, The Independent, did make a difference in terms of the number of news items on health and in particular on HIV/AIDS. The lack of trained health reporters was consistently mentioned by the editors in PNG and in the South Pacific as an obstacle to improving and extending coverage of HIV/AIDS. During 1998-1999, the author participated in some UN-sponsored workshops for journalists in the South Pacific which tried to improve health reporting in the region. There is need for more short and long-term courses on health reporting and the promotion of health as an important topic of concern in PNG and throughout the South Pacific.

Appendix 1

Papua New Guinea Background Information

<u>Population:</u>	4 . 6 million.
<u>Status:</u>	Independent State
<u>Size:</u>	Covers 80% of Pacific Islands divided into 20 provinces
<u>Capital:</u>	Port Moresby
<u>PM:</u>	Sir Mekere Morauta (July 1999)
<u>Literacy</u>	48 % (UNDP, 1998)
<u>HIV/AIDS</u>	15,000-20,000 (UNAIDS,1999b)

Appendix 2

Media Outlets in PNG

Major Newspapers

Post Courier	(28,000)	Daily
The National	(23,000)	Daily
The Independent	(8,000)	Weekly
Eastern Star	(2,5000)	Fortnightly
Wantok	(15,000)	Weekly

Radio

NBC	(Government)
NauFM	(Commercial radio)

Television

EMTV	(Kerry Packer's channel 9)
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Appendix 3

Cafe Pacific: Nius Country Profiles: PNG

Eastern Star: Fortnightly, English; locally owned: Community Resource Development Association Inc. (CORDA), P.O. Box 423, Alotau. Tel: (675) 611141; Fax: (675) 611370. Provincial newspaper covering Milne Bay news and current affairs.

Post-Courier: Daily, 33 521 (ABC December 1996), English; Australian-owned, South Pacific Post Pty Ltd: 62.5 per cent Murdoch's News Ltd through subsidiary; PNG private shareholders, 27.5 per cent; Australian private shareholders, 10 per cent. Editor: Oseah Philemon. Lawes Rd, P.O. Box 85, Port Moresby. Tel: (675) 321 2787; Fax: (675) 321 2721. National PNG news, world news, features sport and business. Winner of 1996 Pacific Newspaper of the Year award. Largest circulation South Pacific daily. Australian Associated Press news feed.

Email: editorial(~postcourier.com.pg

WWW: <http://www.datec.com.pg/postcour/postcour.nsf>

The Independent (formerly The Times of PNG, then The Saturday Independent): Weekly; 9000, English; PNG-owned, Word Publishing Co Pty Ltd, wholly owned by Media Holdings Pty Ltd (shareholders are the following mainstream churches: Roman Catholic, 60 per cent; Evangelical Lutheran, 20 per cent; United, 10 per cent; Anglican, 10 per cent).

Editor: Dominic Kakas; Editor-in-chief (and acting general manager): Anna Solomon. Spring Garden Rd, Hohola; PG Box 1982, Boroko, NCD. Tel: (675) 325 2500; Fax: (675) 325 2579.

Email: word~global.net.pg

WWW: <http://www.tiare.net.pg/wordpub!>

Other Word Publishing titles include:

PNG Business: Monthly specialist business newspaper.

Editor: Faye Duega.

Wantok Niuspepa: Weekly; 15 000; Tok Pisin; PNG-owned,

Word Publishing. Editor: Leo Wafiwa.

The National: Daily; circulation 23 461 (ABC June 1997); English; Malaysian-owned, South Pacific Star Pty Ltd: 51 per cent Monarch Investments through subsidiary, associated with

timber company Rimbunan Hijau. Editor: Frank Senge Kolma. Waigani Drive, Box 6817, Boroko, NCD. Tel: (675) 324 6888; Fax: (675) 324 6767. National PNG news, world news,

features, sport and business. Most extensive use of colour by any South Pacific newspaper. First daily in the Pacific to produce a Website electronic edition (1996).

Strong

Asia-Pacific news coverage. Only Pacific newspaper to take direct Agence France-Press news feed.

Appendix 4

Interviews with 25 editors in the Pacific.

Fiji

Moala, J. (1999), editor, Sunday Post. Interview in Suva, Fiji, 5 March.

Koroi, M. (1998), deputy editor, Daily Post. interview in Suva, Fiji, 13 July .

Netani, R. (1998), deputy editor, Fiji Times. Interview in Suva, Fiji, 16 July .

Hunter, R. (1999), editor, Fiji Times. Interview in Suva, Fiji, 5 March.

Foster-Hildebrand, S. (1999), editor, Pacific Islands Monthly. Interview in Suva, Fiji, 6 March.

Chew, C. (1999), editor, Fiji Sun. Interview in Suva, Fiji, 12 October.

Lomas, P (1999), editor, Islands Business. Interview in Suva, Fiji, 14 October .

Keith-Reid, R. (1998), publisher, Islands Business. Interview in Suva, Fiji, 10 July.

Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)

Moroni, R. (1999), editor, The Island Tribute. Interview in Pohnpei, (FSM), 4 February._

New Caledonia

Marsauche, G. (1998), editor, Ve'a Porotetani. Interview in Noumea, New Caledonia, 25 November.

Papua New Guinea (PNG)

Dickson, A. (1998), editor, The Eastern Star. Interview in Alotau, PNG, 5 February.

Duega, F. (1999), editor, The Independent. Interview in Port Moresby, PNG, 24 May.

Kakas, D. (1997), editor, The Independent. Interview in Port Moresby, PNG, 17 September.

Kelo, Y.(1999), editor, Wantok. Interview in Port Moresby, PNG, 21 May .

Kolma, F. (1999), editor, The National. Interview in Port Moresby, PNG, 20 May.

Nangoi, B. (1998), deputy editor, Post Courier. Interview in Port Moresby, PNG, 25 September.

Philemon, O. (1999) editor, Post Courier. Interview in Port Moresby, PNG, 24 May.

Sela, L . (1999), editor, Post Courier (1978-1992). Interview in Brisbane, Australia, 23 June.

Solomon, A. (1999), managing editor, The Independent. Interview in Port Moresby, PNG, 24 May.

Solomon, S. (1998), deputy editor, The National. Interview in Port Moresby, PNG, 20 September.

Samoa

Asafu, M. (1998), editor, Samoa Weekly. Interview in Apia, Samoa, 4 July.

Malifa, S. (1998), editor, Samoa Observer. Interview in Apia, Somoa, 5 July.

Solomon Islands

Lamani, J. (1999), editor, Solomon Star. Interview in Suva, Fiji, 11 October.

Tahiti

Du Prel, A.(1998), editor, Tahiti Pacifique. Interview in Moorea, Tahiti, 24 October.

Tonga

Moala, K. (1999), editor, Taimi Tonga. Interview in Brisbane, Australia, 24 June.

Appendix 5

Questions used during the interview with editors in PNG and the South Pacific:

1. Knowledge of HIV/AIDS

Are you satisfied with your current knowledge of the disease?

Do you know the current figures/predictions for PNG?

Do you know anyone who is HIV positive or who has developed AIDS?

2. Covering the Story:

How do you see the role of the press in PNG. In regard to HIV/AIDS, what is its role: informational/ educational?

What is the editorial position of your newspaper on HIV/AIDS?

Some commentators argue that press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the Pacific has been patchy and sensational. Are you satisfied with the current coverage in your newspaper?

3. Practical details

Do you have a health section /health reporter for your paper.

Have you written any stories/editorial connected with HIV/AIDS? If so, what type of stories?

Do you have any contact with medical personnel or organisations who are involved with HIV/AIDS. Where do you get your information from?

4. Culture

Do you think certain cultural traditions inhibit press coverage of HIV/AIDS?

Are there any occasions when you would override cultural considerations?

Are there any pressures from government or business not to publish?

Appendix 6

Suggestions presented by the author to Pacific Island editors and journalists on reporting HIV/AIDS.

To work out an editorial policy on HIV/AIDS.

To employ a trained health reporter.

To restart the health page.

Maybe an HIV/AIDS update slot/column.

To put human face/interest on the story.

To spell out a clear message on the risks and harms.

To seek training sessions for journalists.

To encourage the use of health advertisements.

To move from awareness to education.

Appendix 7

Venue: Pacific Regional Conference on HIV/AIDS.

Date: 23 February, 1999.

Topic: Working with the Media.

Speaker: Trevor Cullen: Queensland University.

Introduction:

Recent interviews with 25 newspaper editors in seven South Pacific countries have revealed a growing tension between the media and health workers. The key problem concerns how each sees its role: the media want to report HIV/AIDS in a concise and catchy style while medical people prefer precise and detailed explanations. Failure to achieve this results in mistrust on both sides and often leads to sensational and inaccurate reporting. This situation needs an immediate remedy or else vital information on HIV/AIDS will be denied.

Therefore, if you want your HIV/AIDS story published, you need to learn how the media (TV, radio and newspapers) define news.

What is News

Everyday, newsrooms throughout the South Pacific are flooded with press releases, government reports, the latest financial reviews, domestic and international news services, freelance stories. Then there are the countless telephone calls, faxes, tip-offs, breaking news events.

How does an editor select newsworthy stories from such a vast ocean of information? Selection is dictated by a set of general news values that govern all sectors of the media.

1. News Values:

Timing: An event is more likely to be treated as news if it fits the production deadline schedule so a complete story can be told.

Intensity: Events make the news while small changes go unreported.

Lack of ambiguity: The clearer the meaning the more probable the event will become news.

Unexpectedness: Is this event new and unusual? Common everyday incidents do not have the same impact.

Event orientated: Clearly some events will always be so dramatic in scope and implication. They cannot be ignored as in the case of a plane crash, earthquake or an assassination.

Organisations: Influential government departments, international NGO's national church bodies. All these are more influential than smaller unknown groups.

Elite people: Top officials in the government, business, church and civil service.

Continuity: Does the event allow for further follow-up stories.

Editorial preference: For example, in PNG, both daily newspapers are owned by foreign companies with certain business interests. The result is that certain thorny issues are sidelined.

Human interest: Individual people are easier to identify with than structures and institutions. Also, unusual and curious aspects of peoples lives stimulate interest. Examples might include someone who survived a plane crash or a person living with HIV/AIDS.

Cultural Proximity: The closer the event is to the culture and interests of the readership, its inclusion potential increases.

Entertainment: The media operate like large businesses. Improving circulation figures and audience ratings are vital. Providing only hard news stories fails to improve sales unless they are mixed with light entertaining stories. The media focus on three main areas: information, education and entertainment . The technical term for this is 'infortainment'.

A simple Checklist before you write to the media.

- Is it new?
- Is it unusual?
- Is it interesting?
- Is it significant?
- Is it about people?

2. News values and HIV/AIDS.

Ideas for stories /articles/press releases.

The media want to cover HIV/AIDS and they would like the public to provide information, 'real-life' stories, expert views and opinions.

Human interest: This focuses on people living with HIV/AIDS or those that care for them. If you can encourage them to tell their story it will have a dramatic

effect on the local community. Facts and figures do not provide the same impact or interest. Putting a human face on the problem and showing how it affects ordinary people will be extremely helpful and effective.

Elite people: Journalists often openly confess their own ignorance about HIV/AIDS. They are, however, willing to use 'experts' to explain the story. Ask doctors or health administrators to write about the importance of sexual health in the community. While people have heard about the HIV virus, there is still a woeful lack of knowledge about how it is transmitted and its effect on family life, society and the economy.

The time has come to give a clear message and to move from awareness to the next stage: education. Encourage administrators, managers, pastors and other prominent public figures to speak out on this topic. This keeps the topic in the public forum.

Organisations: Try to get someone from your organisation to add their voice to the debate. Talk about your concerns. Get them to act.

Cultural relevance: Find ways to impress upon people that HIV/AIDS is a serious public health threat that affects everyone. Don't be distracted by the low numbers. Emphasise the huge potential for a widespread epidemic.

Lack of ambiguity : Be clear about what you want to say. Summarise the main point in the heading.

Knowing what the media wants is half the battle. The next stage is to select the relevant news values and then contact the editor with your ideas.

3. How to contact the Media:

The easiest way is to do this is either through a telephone interview or by writing a press release to the editor of the local newspaper, radio or TV station. You will learn how to do this in the workshop immediately after this panel discussion. You do not need any prior training. Just remember these tips.

Writing a Press release

(a) Put the main point in the heading and then write no more than 200-250 words. Keep it to one page. Editors are busy. A useful tip is to get as many of the 5 W's in the top part of the letter.

(b) Use double spacing

(c) The first paragraph is vital. Its impact will decide whether the editor continues with the rest of the letter or throws it in the bin.

Example:

Who: Doctor Davies.

What: Concerned about rising HIV figures.

Where: At Mlumba town.

When: In the last six months.

Why: Ignorance among the local population.

(d) Be positive: Talk about people 'living with HIV' instead of negative expressions such as: the killer disease, the incurable virus.

(e) Leave a contact number and be available for a possible interview.

(f) When you fax your press release, ring up to make sure they have received it. Get the fax numbers of all the media outlets in your area.

Telephone interview

When a reporter rings, ask them to phone back in ten minutes. Use that time to make notes. Remember you cannot say everything about the issue. Select what you consider to be the three most important points and write them down. Do not use a script; you'll sound wooden.

4. Who are Reporters?

Reporters come in three categories: long standing, experienced and new. You are safest with the experienced journalist: they're been round long enough to understand most of what you say and are intent on getting a good story. New journalists will want to enhance their reputation and are keen to jump on anything they see as slightly sensational.

All reporters have short deadlines and tend to be in a hurry. Many news articles exhibit a 'hurried journalistic' style. The time restraint means reporters need you to be clear and concise with your facts.

How to approach reporters

(a) If a reporter suggests visiting you, welcome this. Always be courteous. Rude people make bad news.

(B) Be ready for their questions: Basically they will ask:

Who (The person)?
What (The event)?
When (The time)?
Where (The place)
Why (The reason)?
and How?

(c) It is always best when giving information to the media to be factual, frank and to the point. Use examples and experiences.

(d) You are not bound to answer every question - do not be bullied. If possible make sure you control the interview. Answer the questions in your own words and in complete sentences:

Five Key rules to work effectively with the media

- Be brief:** Do not try to say too much.
Be simple: Avoid jargon and useless words.
Be specific: Do not waffle. If possible refer reporters to someone who knows more.
Be friendly: Reporters respond like everyone else to courtesy.
Be colourful: Use examples or experiences.

Appendix 8

Research paper

Regional Oceanic Conference of Press Councils, 22 -24 June, Brisbane , Australia.

Press Coverage of HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific: Delaying the Inevitable.

Trevor Cullen is a PhD student in the Journalism Department at Queensland University, Brisbane, Australia. He has worked as a journalist in Africa, Europe and Papua New Guinea and has written extensively on the topic of HIV/AIDS.

The possibility of being infected with the HIV virus that leads to AIDS has been a serious public health risk in many Pacific countries for the last ten years. And yet many newspaper editors in the South Pacific region readily admit they lack sufficient knowledge of the disease and have no editorial policy on the topic.

Until recently, the majority of HIV/AIDS stories selected by the editors were either 'foreign' promoting the myth that HIV/AIDS was a foreign disease or coverage was restricted to risk groups such as sex workers and their clients, strongly suggesting that only high-risk groups could contract the disease.

There is little attempt to do any in-depth reporting and expose the extent of the problem which was graphically outlined by the United Nations at an International AIDS conference in Manilla in October 1997. Dr Peter Piot, head of UNAIDS, told the conference that up to seven million people were infected with HIV in the Asia-Pacific region - double the number for the previous three years. He warned that the region could overtake Africa as the world's worst-hit region: "In absolute terms it's gong to happen in a few years' time." This trend, he said, could be reversed if governments shook off their complacency. The disturbing forecast about the Pacific's impending public health nightmare received scant coverage. In Papua New Guinea (PNG) only one of the three major newspapers bothered to cover the story, allocating it just a few lines. This was not an isolated incident.

In December 1997, PNG's Health Minister, Ludger Mond, reinforced Dr Poit's remarks when he said that HIV/AIDS could devastate PNG unless drastic action was taken to reduce its spread in the country. "If control measures are not firmly established now, we could have between 15,000 to 20,000 persons infected by the year 2,000." Referring to what happened in Uganda, Mr Mond said HIV/AIDS crippled productivity and the economy in that country and the same pattern was likely to be repeated in PNG unless the disease was stopped.

The urgency of his remarks received an immediate but unsustainable coverage. It took another few weeks before the next story on HIV/AIDS appeared.

Then at the launch of the PNG National HIV/AIDS Medium term Plan (1998-2002) on June 28, 1998, Prime Minister, Bill Skate, repeated the need for a determined response: "No leader can pretend that HIV/AIDS is not a problem in Papua New Guinea. Many leaders did this around the world and realised too late the devastating effects of this disease. The worldwide HIV/AIDS epidemic has reached the shores of our young nation and is fast becoming a threat to the lives of many of our young people."

For months after the launch, hardly any stories appeared about the disease and if they did, it was normally to announce the recent health department figures which are generally regarded as grossly understated and consequently misleading. It begs the question: why is this major public health threat so under-reported by the press especially when the central thrust of any professional journalist is to tell the truth and inform the public. Surely, informing the public about the risks and harms of HIV/AIDS is a classic example of what is meant by the expression 'in the public interest'.

Editors in the South Pacific do report on HIV/AIDS to varying degrees but stress they are handicapped by factors outside their control. Recent interviews with more than 25 editors from seven South Pacific countries revealed several stumbling blocks.

Top of the list are cultural taboos concerning sex-related issues. Other obstacles put forward by the editors include: more immediate medical problems such as malaria and malnutrition; commercial pressures; lack of resources; the relatively low number of infections; difficulty to get figures from the Ministry of Health; poor levels of investigative journalism and the lure of other 'hot' topics like politics and sport.

Despite these restraints, editors do manage to include some information on this issue. And this is a key problem: it is how they frame the issue and what they omit that causes concern, especially the lack of messages about taking preventive measures.

Take PNG as an example. The country is the largest in the South Pacific in terms of its geography, population and media outlets. Recent research on press coverage of HIV/AIDS in PNG over a ten-year period from 1987 - when the first HIV case was reported - until 1997, highlights some obvious gaps and omissions.

The study looked at PNG's three major newspapers The National, Post Courier and The Independent. While all the newspapers have turned the corner in reporting more local than foreign stories, there is little editorial or front page coverage. These days the disease is reported as a routine health item.

For example, during ten-year breakdown of HIV/AIDS stories in the Post Courier (28, 000) 56 % of stories were foreign; 33 % were local; 5% reached the front page and just 1% ended up as editorials. These last two figures are important because they reveal the newspaper's position on an issue during 1987-97: HIV/AIDS was considered as a story but not a 'hot' one.

The National (circulation 24,000) has led the way in terms of local coverage. Although a relative newcomer - it began in October 1993 - it has printed 144 HIV/AIDS stories of which 112 were local. This large number is partly due to the newspaper employing a full-time health reporter. On closer analysis, however, it is evident the local stories stem from a reactive rather than proactive approach and focus mainly on fundings, figures and workshops. There is little attempt to improve public awareness by including human interest stories or provide clear educational information.

The Independent (circulation 8,000) - the first PNG weekly newspaper to break the story in 1987 - went through a four-year period without any editorial or front page story. While the newspaper concentrated primarily on local stories, the last three years has seen a dramatic drop in coverage. In 1998, HIV/AIDS hardly got a mention. At a time when HIV/AIDS infections rates are rising significantly, it seems strange that it is being reported as just another routine health story. The recent introduction of a health page in March this year has helped provide space for HIV/AIDS stories. Within the first three months five HIV/AIDS stories appeared, admittedly only in regard to facts and figures but at least it is a move in the right direction.

Admittedly, HIV/AIDS is a difficult story to tell because of its long shelf life and people do not want to open up because they fear discrimination and possible reprisal.

If we look at other countries, notably Australia, Britain and the United States, press coverage of HIV/AIDS followed three distinct phases. First, from 1982-1986, HIV/AIDS was framed mainly as a gay disease. The second phase (1986-1987), when it was confirmed that the HIV virus could be transmitted heterosexually and so affect a much wider section of the population, press coverage reached saturation point with a continuous string of public awareness campaigns. The third phase (1989 onwards) saw a dramatic drop in stories and complacency set in.

Many South Pacific countries like PNG are still struck at the first phase; restricting the disease to risk groups instead of exposing the dangers of risk behaviours. This is a worrying situation.

There is a need to move beyond denial and deliver a clear message. I speak from experience. I worked in Malawi in southern Africa from 1981-91. When I arrived, no one had HIV. By the time I left, 22 per cent of the 10 million population were infected. The press, the government, the churches all failed to

respond until it was too late. The result was that thousands of people, especially the young, died unnecessarily of ignorance.

HIV/AIDS came late to the South Pacific region and so it is possible to learn from the mistakes that affected other parts of the world. As yet, this does not seem to be the case and the Malawian situation is beginning to reoccur in slow motion throughout the South Pacific.

The South Pacific Commission(SPC) issued a blunt warning in its 1997 report on STD/AIDS in Pacific island countries and territories. "It is widely acknowledged that HIV infections and AIDS cases in Pacific island countries are under reported. Nevertheless, the HIV epidemic in the Pacific is considerably more serious than the available data suggest. The epidemic is also undoubtedly worsening in the region overall, and particularly so in some countries."

Presently, the figures for HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific are relatively low. On closer inspection you realise that testing for HIV/AIDS is poor or non-existent; peoples knowledge of the disease is woefully inadequate; stigma and prejudice are rampant and the invisibility of the virus means you can carry and transmit the virus for up to ten years without even knowing.

Add to this the continuing increase in STD's, casual and unprotected sex, unwanted pregnancies and the picture becomes much sharper. Focusing on figures is not the main issue but the huge potential risk of infection.

In defence of the editors who vet stories for publication, it must be stated that it is not the sole responsibility of press to inform the public. The government, health departments, non-government organisations and the churches all have a part to play in awareness and prevention campaigns.

But the press has a strong influence when it comes to informing the public and embarrassing politicians and decision makers to act. As one South Pacific editor remarked: "When governments are weak and corrupt, the press is often the last line of defence." It seems that role is urgently needed right now.

Maybe the time has come for editors to move from a 'hit and miss' approach and adopt an editorial policy that is more systematic and comprehensive. Also, there is a need to shift up a few gears from awareness to public information and education.

Three years ago, when launching the United Nations report, "Time to Act: The Pacific Response to HIV/AIDS, the then Fijian Prime Minister, Sitiveni Rabuka, summed up the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the South Pacific as:

"There is a clear enough signal that there is a storm gathering force: a storm than can become a devastating hurricane such as we have never experienced before and a storm which, if we do not take the necessary precautions, we will not live through or live to regret forever."

Hopefully, it is not too late for newspaper editors to hear and embrace this advice.

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Appendix 9

Press Coverage of HIV/AIDS In the South Pacific

A talk for Journalists given by the author at UN-sponsored Workshops in Samoa (2 - 5 July) and Tonga (6 - 8 July), 1998.

The central issue: Less coverage as HIV increases.

PNG faces a potentially huge increase in HIV/AIDS infection rates in the next 15-20 years when possibly 20 per cent of the population could be infected with the deadly HIV virus. In the face of this, the press in PNG seems either unable or unwilling to inform and educate people about this impending serious public health crisis.

The two national dailies, The National and Post Courier, cover the story but in a patchy and haphazard way.

Press stories are limited to either foreign stories or coverage of some local workshops. No real attempt is made to expose the extent of infection. Hardly any HIV/AIDS stories make it onto the front page (3 in the last ten years) or as editorials. There is no editorial policy and only one newspaper has a health reporter. This indifference contradicts the basic guiding principles of journalism which is to tell the truth and keep the public informed

The public have a right to be informed about a deadly contagious disease in their community. All 20 provinces in PNG have reported cases of HIV/AIDS.

Looking at the difficulties:

Several reasons are put forward as an explanation of why the story is not adequately covered.

1. Culture: It is a difficult story to cover because HIV/AIDS is perceived as a sexually transmitted disease which is contracted through deviant behaviour. Also, people are frightened to be known or associated with HIV/AIDS because of possible discrimination and recrimination. Thirdly, trying to put a human face on the topic is extremely difficult (but not impossible). Describing possible risks and prevention methods presents cultural difficulties.

2. Lack of knowledge and conviction: Although journalists know the basic facts, few are motivated to cover the story. Journalists wonder whether the

projected doomsday scenario is accurate or wildly exaggerated. Besides few journalists know of someone who is living with HIV/AIDS.

3. Other stories are 'hotter' and more immediate: Politics, sports, crime, rising prices, subsidies for health and education: all these affect people in their day to day living. Talking about a disease that can take up to ten years to manifest itself is difficult to sell. It's an invisible (unreal) story.

4. Selling newspapers is a top priority: Too much gloom and doom could affect sales. Out of sight; out of mind. Everyone is happy.

5. Shelf life: HIV/AIDS was first reported over 10 years ago in PNG. It went through the three cycles of health coverage: awareness, peak and routinization. How do you give the story a new angle after 10 years despite the fact that infection rates have not peaked in PNG.

6. Visibility: In many African countries the press had no option but to confront the situation because of its widespread visible manifestation in the community. AIDS related sicknesses are beginning to surface in PNG. Sadly, it looks as if we will wait till the fire is well lit before we act.

7. Government Support: This happened recently in PNG. The Prime Minister said he was keen to see the establishment of a National AIDS Council. Yet, lack of funds has delayed its creation. The previous Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan, was opposed to any government intervention claiming that more people died from malaria. In countries like Uganda and Zimbabwe the government admitted the seriousness of the situation and encouraged AIDS campaigns and agencies to help. PNG suffers from a strong dose of 'denialitis' on this point.

8. Exact figures are difficult to obtain: This is because of poor blood surveillance and only a few places that test for the HIV virus. Also, only a handful of doctors send in their samples or even realise HIV/AIDS in the patient's condition. Journalists, meanwhile, do not want to exaggerate or overstate the situation.

9. Few experts are willing to give information: To make reports sound credible it is useful to have a contact in the medical field who is willing to assist with information. This is a two-way process. Also, there is a need to improve dialogue between the press and the medical profession and to understand that both start from different premises.

10. Public figures: In North America, press coverage of HIV/AIDS increased dramatically when the film star Rock Hudson died of AIDS in 1985 and the basketball star Magic Johnson was diagnosed with HIV in 1986. This confirmed that HIV/AIDS could affect anyone even the rich and famous and that it was transmitted both homosexually and heterosexually. PNG is yet to announce the death of a prominent person from HIV/AIDS although it has happened already.

Press Coverage of HIV/AIDS in other countries.

To avoid being stuck in what appears a hopeless situation it may be useful to observe how other countries have covered the epidemic. HIV/AIDS came relatively late to the Pacific region. It surfaced in other continents well before the first recorded case in the Pacific. For example, in Australia, United States, Africa and Europe.

In Australia, North America and Europe (Britain and France), HIV/AIDS was reported in three distinct phases.

First, it was described as the 'gay plague'. This was due to the fact that the first people discovered with HIV/AIDS were from the gay community in USA. They were an easy group to target in order to explain away the problem. The press presumed (wrongly) that HIV was restricted to this group only. Within a short period drug addicts joined the list of culprits.

This period of press reporting was characterised by blatant prejudice against gay people and their 'deviant behaviour'. Sufferers were stereotyped and depicted as people who deserved what they had contracted. Exaggerated metaphors such as 'plague' 'killer disease' were used to frighten people away from mixing with these 'risks groups'.

The first stage lasted roughly four years from 1982 -1986 and the majority of stories were related either to the gay community or scientific assessments.

The second stage occurred when medical experts realised that the HIV virus could be transmitted heterosexually and so affect a much wider section of the population. Governments became involved and launched brief but intensive media campaigns to warn the public against possible infection.

Even though it appears they over-reacted, it had the desired effect; to instill fear and make people aware of the need to be vigilant about their sexual practices. It must be said that the campaigns did not directly affect sexual behavioural practices. They were too brief and were not sustained.

The press promoted the government AIDS campaigns and used scare tactics in other stories which increased dramatically when famous personalities such as Rock Hudson and Arthur Ashe died of AIDS while basket ball star Magic Johnson admitted to living with the HIV virus. The period last from 1986 -1988 and was noted for its saturation coverage of HIV/AIDS.

After 1988 we move into the third phase of reporting when HIV/AIDS stories became routine. The story was reported as just another health item. Coverage increased only when a famous personality was found to be HIV positive or with

the announcement of a potential scientific breakthrough. This period is described as the complacency years. It is prevalent today.

Overall Comment:

The majority of studies on press coverage of HIV/AIDS in these three continents examine the period from 1982 -1990. We await a more recent update.

In Africa, press coverage of HIV/AIDS began slowly but developed quickly due to widespread infection rates in the mid 1980's and government support for intervention. Heterosexual intercourse accounted for 99 per cent of HIV infections in Sub-Saharan Africa.

There is no published research on the press coverage in the South Pacific. I hope this research can fill the gap.

How can South Pacific journalists improve press coverage of HIV/AIDS in their own countries.

Introduction

Press coverage, for example, peaked in PNG in 1988 -1989 well before HIV/AIDS was officially recognised within the country. This was due to the fact that HIV/AIDS was reported, for the most part, as a foreign story with new stories being lifted from other continents and countries where there was widespread coverage. Little attempt was made to investigate the domestic scene.

We can, however, learn valuable lessons about how to cover the story from the press in other parts of the world and avoid the mistakes they made.

1. The role of the press is primarily to tell the truth .

This is achieved to some extent by adopting the roles of ***watchdog*** and ***gatekeeper***. If under-reporting of HIV/AIDS in South Pacific countries continues, we run the risk of preventing this topic from entering the public arena by failing to impart important information, stimulate discussion and ultimately improve peoples awareness and knowledge.

People know about HIV/AIDS but their knowledge of its transmission and impact (from various field studies conducted in PNG) has exposed a woefully inadequate grasp of the problem.

Greater in-depth reporting is needed. Rather than adopt a reactive approach (watching how the story develops) proactive journalism (going out to get the story) is essential.

2. Press coverage of HIV/AIDS in a number of South Pacific countries has emphasized the situation in other countries to such an extent that it can appear as if the problem belongs solely to other countries. To make an impact the story has to be covered primarily as a local story. It is no longer out there: it is in the middle of our community.

3. There is an urgent need to embarrass governments to take up the issue through intensive government-sponsored awareness campaigns and the setting up of national and provincial AIDS councils. The press achieved this in other countries. Do not allow governments to wait for large numbers of people to become ill before acting. Time is running out. Remember that politicians and policy makers read the press and that it is possible to get the topic on the agenda and push it up nearer the top.

4. Getting medical experts to offer advice and articles: There is a need to improve co-operation in this area remembering that although both professions start from different premises, they can help each other to improve and extend coverage.

5. HIV/AIDS needs a human face: This is difficult to achieve because no one wants to tell their story because of the social stigma attached to HIV/AIDS. It is, however, worth the effort to find ways to get people to speak even if it means changing names and locations. It is more effective than pages of charts, facts and figures.

6. Positioning the story: Consider using more front page stories and editorials. There are other sections such as youth, women and health where important education material on HIV/AIDS can be inserted.

7. Spell out clearly the risks and harms to individuals and the community. This is not the time to be politically correct. We must, however, find ways to be culturally sensitive.

Plan of Action: How to Write the Story

Spread the message to fellow journalists: it's time to act.

Find out the latest facts and figures.

Make contact with medical personnel who are involved with HIV/AIDS work.

Try to put a human face on the problem.

Suggest ideas for a relevant editorial policy such a beginning an **AIDS Watch** section in the newspaper

Use other parts of the newspaper to insert important material about HIV/AIDS in sections that deal with youth, women, lifestyle and health.

Avoid focusing on particular risk groups. This only promotes the myth that the disease is restricted to certain marginal groups. The reality is that everyone is potentially at risk.

Appendix 10

Reporting Diseases in the Pacific.

This is the paper presented by Trevor Cullen at the annual meeting of the Pacific Islands News association (PINA) on 8 October, 1999, Suva, Fiji.

Problem:

Heart disease, tuberculosis, STDs and HIV/AIDS have one common feature: they are, with the correct information and application, all preventable diseases. Yet, throughout the Pacific region such diseases are on the increase. What can the media (press, radio and television) do to help stem the rising tide of ill-health that creates continuing social and economic hardship.

Role of the Media

Basically, the media have a threefold aim: to provide information, education and entertainment. While some in the media have opted purely for the latter component, most editors and journalists are committed to informing their audiences about events that affect them. Generally, however, news stories concentrate on politics, sports and business while health is regarded as less appealing. This may explain why the health page has disappeared from many newspapers throughout the Pacific.

Yet health is an issue that affects the daily lives of all Pacific Islanders and reporting diseases, while less 'hot' and 'catchy', demands both information and education. While it is vital for the public to know the extent of a health problem through reports on workshops and the latest statistics, there is an additional need: to provide ways, methods, practices that help combat preventable diseases. Without these two aspects (facts and remedies), news reports create a sense of helplessness and worse still, complacency.

Media reports of diseases throughout the Pacific region tend to focus purely on the extent of the problem and avoid the important issue of prevention. One example of this can be seen in the coverage of HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea's two daily newspapers, The National and Post Courier during the first six months of 1999. While both newspapers deserve praise for their undoubted commitment in covering this difficult subject, there is still an over-concentration on facts and workshops with little in the way of human interest, people living with HIV/AIDS or ways to combat the disease.

'Mobilising information'. (MI)

This is where the concept of '**mobilising Information**' can assist both the media and the public. The concept, put forward by media researchers Kristiansen and Harding (1984) and Singer and Endreny (1987), criticised the media for concentrating only on the '**harms**' (figures and facts) of a disease while omitting a description of the '**risk**' factors and ways to prevent infection.

So with HIV/AIDS, telling people about the impending epidemic, alerts them to the serious health problem; *spelling out explicitly and precisely the risks and ways to prevent HIV infection, can mobilise a more active response*. The use of **MI** applies to coverage of other common diseases in the Pacific such as heart disease, diabetes and STDs. Avoiding the use of **MI** in reporting diseases creates the possibility that readers will perceive a disease such as HIV/AIDS as a purely theoretical threat which does not involve them instead of an immediate and serious public health threat to everyone.

The omission of **MI** in relation to coverage of HIV/AIDS is like telling people only about the calm before a violent storm instead of informing them that the storm has already come ashore and without proper precautions, the effects will be devastating. While diseases such as malaria and malnutrition are of more immediate concern, HIV/AIDS has long-lasting health, social, economic and developmental implications. We know how HIV/AIDS decimated other parts of the world. Why are we waiting for a repeat performance?

The seriousness of a disease like HIV/AIDS in the Pacific was spelled out by the executive head of the United Nations agency on HIV/AIDS, Dr Peter Piot, at the 5th International Congress on HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific in Kuala Lumpur from October 23-27, 1999. He said that a country like Papua New Guinea had all the ingredients for an epidemic on the scale of what happened in many Sub-Saharan African countries. Currently, African countries such as Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe have HIV/AIDS infections rates that affect 20 per cent of their respective populations.

This scenario demands a decisive response. Dr Piot remarked: "The HIV/AIDS epidemic across the region is still largely ahead of us. Moreover, I hope that none of us assumes that just because a country has low rates today, those rates cannot change with frightening speed. Given what we know about the epidemic, such naivete is unforgivably short-sighted."

The time has come for the media in the Pacific to stop playing a small tin whistle and start blowing a large and continuous trumpet blast. The HIV virus has come ashore and people need to be told clearly and consistently about how to protect themselves. Likewise, political leaders at the regional and local level together with church leaders and other agenda- setters should adopt a similar approach. While HIV/AIDS is the concern of everyone, the media are well placed and tremendously influential in shaping public perception of the problem.

Studies on the use of MI in the media have shown positive results. The most recent example was seen in Uganda where there has been a 28 per cent decrease in HIV infections among urban youth in Kampala (UNAIDS, 1999b).

Recommendations.

In the Pacific region, there are cultural and commercial barriers to adopting **MI** as part of news reporting on diseases in the region. **MI**, however, offers an approach that potentially promotes a positive rather than merely passive response. Is it enough to inform the public about an impending disaster without including information about protection, prevention and ultimately survival? Surely, when reporting diseases, information and education are different sides of the same coin.

The removal of the health page from many Pacific newspapers and the lack of trained health reporters are major setbacks to improving the reporting of medical issues and diseases throughout the Pacific. Both these problems need to be addressed.

Appendix 11

Abstract For 5th ICAAP Conference, Kuala Lumpur, October 23-27, 1999.

Press coverage of HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific. Delaying the Inevitable.

Trevor Cullen is a PhD student in the Journalism Department at Queensland University, Brisbane, Australia. His PhD research analyses 'Press Coverage of HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea'. He has worked as a journalist in Africa, Europe and Papua New Guinea and has written extensively on the topic of HIV/AIDS.

Objective:

This paper examines problems the press face with HIV/AIDS coverage in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Pacific region. The research outlines ways to improve the informational and educational content of the stories.

Methodology:

PNG was selected because it is the largest country in the South Pacific in terms of geography and population (4.6 million). It has the highest number of HIV/AIDS cases. The research included a ten-year study of all articles on HIV/AIDS in PNG's two daily newspapers Post Courier and The National and a weekly entitled, The Independent from 1987-1997. This was supplemented with in-depth interviews with the editors of these three newspapers together with more than 25 face to face interviews with newspaper editors in seven Pacific countries. (Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, PNG, New Caledonia, Tahiti and Micronesia).

Results:

PNG newspaper editors readily admit they lack sufficient knowledge of the disease and have no editorial policy on the topic. Until recently, the majority of HIV/AIDS stories selected were either 'foreign' promoting the myth that HIV/AIDS was a foreign disease or coverage was restricted to risk groups such as sex workers and their clients, strongly suggesting that only these people could contract the disease instead of a wider focus on risk behaviours within the population.

News stories tend to focus on statistics and workshops. There is little in the way of mobilising information or human interest angles. Comparative studies of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in other parts of the world show that the PNG editors, together

with many of their fellow editors in other Pacific countries, are repeating similar mistakes made by the Australian, British, North American and African press in the 1980s: the language is negative and sensational; there is little educational content on preventive methods and issues connected to HIV/AIDS are framed too narrowly.

Final Remarks

In 1996, when launching the United Nations report, "***Time to Act. The Pacific Response to HIV/AIDS***", the then Fijian Prime Minister, Sitiveni Rabuka, summed up the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Pacific as:

A clear enough signal that there is a storm gathering force: a storm than can become a devastating hurricane such as we have never experienced before and a storm which, if we do not take the necessary precautions, we will not live through or live to regret forever (UNAIDS 1996: 13).

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Appendix 12

In- Country Travel Itinerary

Papua New Guinea: (Melanesia)

17 - 25	September	1997	Port Moresby, Mount Hagan.
20 -27	September	1998	Port Moresby.
17 -24	May	1999	Port Moresby
1 -5	May	2000	Port Moresby.

Fiji: (Melanesia)

9 - 17	July	1998	Suva.
21 - 25	February	1999	Nadi.
1 - 8	March	1999	Suva.
4 - 14	October	1999	Suva.

Samoa: (Polynesia)

1 - 5	July	1998	Apia
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Tonga: (Polynesia)

5 - 9	July	1998	Nuku'alofa
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Federated States of Micronesia; (Micronesia)

2 - 9	February	1999	Pohnpei
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Tahiti: (French Polynesia)

23 - 30	October	1998	Papeete
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New Caledonia: (French Melanesia)

21 - 28	November	1998	Noumea
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Appendix 13

Report on Research Travel Award (\$A5,000) from Queensland University.

Tahiti, French Polynesia:
18 - 22 October, 1998.

AIM:

To examine the extent of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in French Polynesia and to encourage editors to develop a more consistent approach to the problem.

Background:

The South Pacific has three distinct ethnic groups: Melanesians, Micronesians and Polynesians. The press that serve these groups has been slow to respond to HIV/AIDS even though it first appeared in many of their communities over ten years ago. I wanted to find out through interviews and an examination of newspaper clippings whether French Polynesia was any different.

One of the aims of my trip was to attend the annual meeting of Pacific editors, which was due to be held in Papeete from October 19-26. Unfortunately, it was cancelled suddenly because the President of Tahiti was unable to attend the opening ceremony. I found out later that he had to rush to the High court in Paris to defend himself against allegations of fraud and embezzlement. The editors' meeting was rescheduled for mid-December. This was the second time it had been postponed. Unsure whether it would ever take place, I decided to go alone.

Findings:

The press is small and mainly confined to the capital, Papeete. During my four day stay. I interviewed all the newspaper editors: Dominique Monti, editor of the daily *Les Nouvelles de Tahiti*; Gilles Marsauche, editor of the weekly newspaper, *Vea Pontetant*, and Alex W.Du Prel, editor of the monthly magazine, *Tahiti Pacifique*.

Tahiti has the second highest number of HIV cases in the south Pacific (184). Yet none of newspapers has an editorial policy in regard to the HIV story. The editors think the HIV/AIDS crisis had peaked and that these days the story has lost its importance Besides, they said, their readers were not interested.

They presented a number of commercial and cultural reasons why the story is not covered. However, they were surprised when I told them about Dr Gilles

Deschamps, who heads the Ministry of Health's HIV/AIDS programme for French Polynesia. He informed me that the number of HIV cases had increased significantly in Tahiti's three main islands during the last two years and that HIV infections would continue to rise.

I inquired from the editors whether complacency and denial were the real obstacles to the lack of press coverage of HIV/AIDS in French Polynesia and in many Pacific countries.

I did discover that Tahitians have widespread access to French television and that the aggressive HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns in 1987 - 1988 throughout France and French Polynesia did help to frighten people out of their complacency. Maybe it is time for another series of campaigns.

Results:

Although, disappointed by the sudden postponement of the annual PINA conference, I did manage to interview several newspaper editors. This allowed for a broader understanding of what has happened in French Polynesia in terms of press coverage of HIV/AIDS. The information I gathered in Tahiti will help provide a wider and more detailed presentation of the topic for my PhD thesis.

Also, I was able to challenge the editors to look again at their current attitude to the situation since HIV/AIDS remains a public health problem in their country.

New Caledonia; French Melanesia: 21 - 24 November 1999.

AIM:

To discover whether press coverage of HIV/AIDS in French Melanesia was any different from other parts of the Pacific. Secondly, to encourage editors to cover the story.

Background:

New Caledonia has the third highest number of HIV cases in the Pacific after Tahiti (184) and Papua New Guinea(1, 346). It is similar to Tahiti in that both countries are French overseas territories and the people are French citizens with access to French television and newspapers.

Findings:

The editors of the two daily newspapers (Le Quotidien Caledonien and Les Nouvelles) were unavailable. Instead, I conducted face to face interviews with their assistants, Carole De Kermoyan and Mina Vilayleck.

Also, I used the South Pacific forum's library in Noumea and located several articles on HIV/AIDS in the South Pacific with particular emphasis on French Melanesia.

A similar story emerged to the one I had encountered in Tahiti. Initially, back in 1987 when the first HIV patient was diagnosed in the country, there was intensive coverage. By 1990, however, the HIV story faded and only a trickle of articles have appeared since then. Complacency has set in. The large number of cases in both Tahiti and New Caledonia is due, in part, to their extensive testing programme and facilities.

Results

Some important facts emerged. First, that the HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns on French Television (1988-989) were successful in promoting awareness and behavioural change. Most other South Pacific countries, however, have yet to organise such campaigns either on the television or in the press. It is time for another round of campaigns.

Second, it seems Pacific newspaper editors find it difficult to re-ignite or resurrect interest in a topic that has been covered thoroughly in the past. In 'face to face' interviews, editors are put on the spot and tend to answer in a frank and direct way. This is in stark contrast to previous interviews with such editors which were conducted using a written questionnaire format. Hardly any of them replied. What's more, the editors are the ones who ultimately decide what goes into their newspaper. They preferred and appreciated the personal contact.

Appendix 14

Glossary of terms related to HIV/AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome(AIDS)

A condition in which the body's immune system, as a result of HIV infection, loses its ability to fight off infections and so becomes vulnerable to opportunistic diseases.

Antibody positive

These are people who have been exposed to HIV and who have developed antibodies to the virus and are said to be antibody positive, or seropositive.

Antiretroviral drugs

These are substances that stop or suppress the activity of a virus such as HIV. They include AZT, ddI, ddC, 3TC, d4T and 1592. These drugs are also known as antiretroviral drugs, because HIV is a particular kind of virus known as retrovirus.

Endemic

A chronic incidence of a particular disease in a certain population or region.

HIV Sentinel Surveillance

A method for estimating the extent of HIV infection in a population. Specific sites (sentinel sites) are selected to provide a representative sample of the population.

Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV)

A human retrovirus considered by most to be the cause of AIDS.

Window Period

This is the time between when a person is infected and when the person's blood tests are positive for HIV antibodies.

Source: 12th World AIDS Conference. Geneva, 28 June - 3 July, 1998.

The window period occurs because it takes a certain amount of time for the immune system to recognise HIV and develop antibodies in response.

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