

Hearing postponed for undercover drug trafficker

By Janice Brunson
Staff writer

A hearing on whether to dismiss new drug charges against former Farmington Hills drug trafficker Arthur Abrams, whose testimony resulted in federal and state indictments of 59 dealers and users, was postponed Wednesday until late June.

Abrams, charged with conspiracy to deliver 225 to 649 grams of cocaine and facing an additional 20 to

30 years in jail, is currently serving time at the Western Wayne Correction Facility in Plymouth after probation on lesser drug charges was revoked a year ago.

Abrams pled guilty in March 1988 to distributing 50 grams of cocaine after agreeing to work as an informant for the Oakland County prosecutor. He was sentenced to five years probation.

The new charges stem from allegations that Abrams continued to use and deal drugs after entering

into the agreement, thereby violating it and subjecting himself to original charges stemming from his arrest in December 1987.

Abrams maintains police knew he used drugs during the lengthy investigation following his arrest, but waited until he had testified in federal and state court against 33 dealers and 26 users before revoking his probation and filing new charges.

"THESE GUYS are trying to bury me in here, after I did so much for them. It's wrong," said Abrams by

phone from the prison in Plymouth where he is incarcerated.

Following his arrest, Abrams worked with officers from the Southeastern Michigan Conspiracy Organization (SEMCO) in Livonia, participating in sting operations and wearing a microphone to tape drug transactions with suppliers and dealers, and calling former customers by phone to sell them drugs.

During this period, Abrams said he was under severe stress and even attempted suicide on one occasion.

"I told them (in May 1988) I had a severe drug problem (crack cocaine) and they looked the other way."

SEMCO prosecutor Eric Kaiser said, "I won't dispute that. Most informers used in drug cases are addicts. But it's their responsibility to correct that status. Being an addict doesn't mean you've used today or dealt today."

Kaiser said he and the officer in charge of Abrams, Sgt. Ray White who is no longer with SEMCO, knew "at some point in time" that Abrams

was continuing to abuse illicit drugs. He was tested once for drug use by the Oakland County Probation Department. Test results proved negative to utilize Abrams as an informant.

"Certainly he was using drugs," said Abrams' attorney, Michael Friedman of Birmingham. "He had a real bad habit. He had a girlfriend who had a real bad habit."

"But there is no hard and fast evidence he was dealing, not commercially dealing," Friedman added.

Many vulnerable to 'disease of the dying family'

By Darrell Pressley
Staff writer

The AIDS epidemic, which has killed 1,268 people in Michigan since 1981, 435 affected people between the ages of 20 and 29 - which is almost one quarter of the state's cases. These are people infected with the disease in their teen years and later diagnosed with the virus, Schumacher said.

Aids could be considered the disease of the dying family, because of its effect on the women of child bearing age and their children.

Of the 2,080 cases reported in Michigan, 435 affected people between the ages of 20 and 29 - which is almost one quarter of the state's cases. These are people infected with the disease in their teen years and later diagnosed with the virus, Schumacher said.

"The epidemic is hitting young Americans the hardest."

Schumacher said the number of cases of whites are higher, but in proportion to the minority population as a whole, there are more blacks and Hispanics getting infected now than before.

IN MICHIGAN, 985 cases of blacks with the disease were reported; 45 Hispanics were diagnosed; three Native Americans; and three Asians.

In the metropolitan area, Detroit had the highest number of cases reported in the state with 899. Oakland County was second with 230 cases and Wayne County outside of Detroit with 217.

"I think a disease doesn't know Eight Mile Road," Schumacher said.

Initially, the predominant risk groups were homosexuals and intravenous drug users. Today, heterosexuals are now more at risk, said Becky Horan, nurse epidemiologist at St. Joseph Hospital in Pontiac.

In the report, of the 73 cases involving heterosexual activity (4%), five were bisexual men. Women have to understand if they date a

sexual man they can contract the disease, the experts said.

"People don't realize there's a lot of bisexuality around," Schumacher said.

A personal concern of Schumacher, is the effect AIDS will have on women and children.

Schumacher, who said she is a feminist, said women and children often do not have the resources and skills to protect themselves. And

with women often being the only means of support and care, a mother who contracts the disease, "has a real impact on the family."

Though the statistics are plateauing and are not appearing as severe as in the past, AIDS experts are concerned that people may become complacent in protecting themselves from the virus.

The number of people diagnosed is positive, but the report may not give

the public a clear picture of the epidemic, Schumacher said.

"This is really a disaster in slow motion," she said.

Much of the AIDS transmission is still connected to intravenous drug use. But with the rates of syphilis cases increasing, there is a correlation between those cases and crack cocaine use, Schumacher said.

WHEN A PERSON takes cocaine,

their sexual drive increases - which could account for a number of cases, she said.

On the brighter side of the issue, experts are happy to see no increase in the numbers of cases statewide. Protection, education and medical breakthroughs have contributed to the stabilizing of the statistics, the experts said.

Colleges are also providing information for people, Schumacher said.

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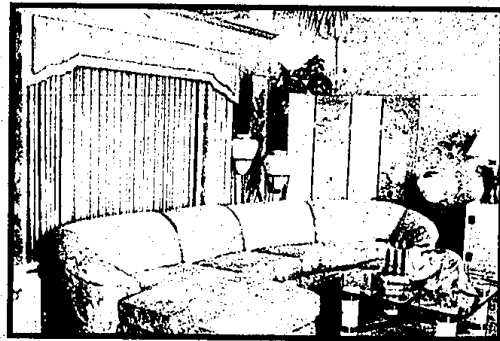
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