

# OU AIDS incident 'life and death' to students

BY MARGARET O'BRIEN  
STAFF WRITER

Students at Oakland University said they are still feeling a little nervous following reports earlier this week that they could have been exposed to live strains of HIV in a campus biology lab.

"Just the idea that it could have happened is terrifying," biology student Jennifer Davis of Farmington said, adding she is still uncertain about what occurred.

"I'm hearing about this piece by piece from gossip and I wish

they would just tell me what really happened. This is not something to mess around with," she said. "This is life and death."

Student Tim Moore of Rochester, who took a biology class a couple of years ago, agreed and said the university should be more proactive and focus on preventing future incidents. "With AIDS, there should never even be a question of whether a student might or might not have been exposed," he said. "It should be away, far off, in another building under lock and key — and

chains." Oakland University officials said they make every effort to protect the safety of students and staff and sent letters just as a precaution to the 16 students who had access to a lab where strains of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, were used in research. "Only 16 students had access to the lab and none of them had access to the material," said David Dissend, vice president of university relations, adding he feels the incident has been blown out of proportion because AIDS is a fac-

tor. A statement released by the university Tuesday said Oakland University has been working with local health authorities who assured administrators that the research involved did not expose any students to the virus. "We have no indication that any of these students were exposed. However, we are discussing the matter with these students to alleviate their concerns. The remaining members of the university community have no cause for concern," the statement said.

The information came to light late last week when a parent of one of the students with access to the lab contacted the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office. The parent became alarmed when the university sent a letter to the student requesting an HIV test. Prosecutor Richard Thompson said he passed the information along to the Michigan Department of Health for its evaluation and investigation and will become involved if health department finds any evidence of criminal wrongdoing.

"At this point we are just the facilitators in this," Thompson said. Several university officials were ordered not to speak to the media about the incident while those that did speak they knew little about the specifics of the exposure that could have occurred in the 1992-1993 school year. Dissend said he did not know what prompted the letter to students about the need for an HIV test two weeks ago. He said the virus was destroyed in March of 1993.



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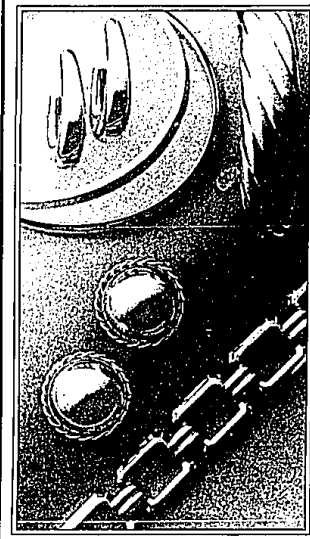
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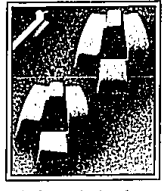
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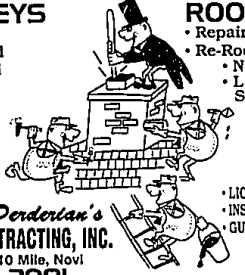
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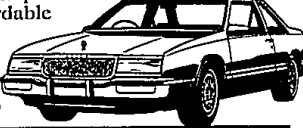
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