Academics Debate Sex Amid Controversy

By Ray O'Leaglin
San Francisco's debate over the role of gay sexual activity in transmitting AIDS moved to a new venue last week. A group of medical and behavior modification experts convened last weekend at the University of California at San Francisco.

Under the auspices of UCSF's AIDS Clinical Research Center, the two-day conference was intended "to bring together experts in varied fields and discuss the role of sexual contracting AIDS," said conference chairman, Dr. Marcus Conant. From its inception the conference was expected to find ways of changing gay men's sex behavior. Attending the meetings were medical, behavioral psychology, and media representatives from around the country including the federal Center for Disease Control.

But as word about the high-powered conference filtered through the community, controversy grew around it. Attention was attracted from as far away as New York City with the Gay Men's Health Crisis sending an observer. Critics pointed out that the participation was "unsophisticated gay people, no people with AIDS and no ethic minority members. It had no ethic minority representatives from the many gay organizations that have been working with the AIDS crisis such as the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights (BAPHR).

The conference was broken into four panels — risk factors, health and behavioral psychology, gay identity and health education. Although working sessions were closed, discussions outside the conference were open. It was hoped that it was hoped to find ways of changing gay men's sex behavior. Attending the meetings were medical, behavioral psychology, and media representatives from around the country including the federal Center for Disease Control.

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