(2)

TRUE HIV-1 INFECTION IN A PYGMY

SIR,—Since the first clinical and serological surveys done on pygmies in 1984[1] no instance of either HIV-1 antibodies confirmed by immuno/western blotting or of AIDS has been reported for this ethnic group.[2] From 1984 to date we have tested 782 sera from pygmies in the Central African Republic for HIV-1 antibodies. The Aka and Babinga pygmy populations investigated live in the two main forest areas of the country, Lobaye and Sangha. Sera were screened by ELISA ('ELAVIA', Diagnostic Pasteur) and 32 were positive; none was confirmed by immuno/western blot ('LAV-Blot', Diagnostic Pasteur). In March, 1987, from the Sangha pygmy group, 1 serum was found to contain antibodies directed against all HIV-1 proteins (gp160, gp41, p68, p55, p40, p25, and p18). The patient, a 33-year-old healthy woman, said that she had had sexual intercourse with a 40-year-old male Bantu from the same area. His serum was found to contain antibodies to HIV-1 envelope proteins when he presented with clinical symptoms of AIDS-related complex. This observation leads us to conclude that pygmies are susceptible to HIV-1 despite their apparently isolated ecosystem.

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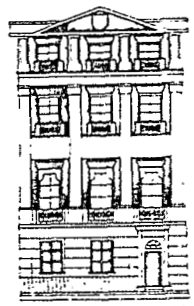

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