

Trevor Stammers sees similarities between the gay sex and tobacco smoking debates.

Sex, Lies & Cigarettes

Tasteful. Sensitive. Beautiful. That's what the creators of the recent gay advertising campaign say about their posters. On one level I'm inclined to agree with them. The image accompanying the slogan 'Thank God for men', could easily be of two brothers embracing each other. I certainly don't find it offensive on the grounds of indecency. But as a Christian doctor, I object to it because it is utterly dishonest. It reminds me of the tasteful, sensitive and beautiful images used in cigarette advertisements and like them it ought to carry a government health warning.

If the gay lifestyle only consisted of thanking God for other men, that would be fine. However, despite protests to the contrary from gay activists, it is anal intercourse that is central to gay sexual expression. Of course ano-receptive intercourse is an equally dangerous practice for gay men and straight women alike, but it is not integral to heterosexual union.

This is why anal cancer is now more common in homosexual men than cervical cancer is in women. Indeed, homosexual sex is altering the entire demographics of this disease and several others.

'I had a patient diagnosed with syphilis recently', a colleague from the North of England told me at a conference recently. 'Was he gay?' I ventured. 'How did you know that?' he gasped. Actually, it wasn't difficult. Even in Holland with its celebrated gay culture and safer-sex education, rates of syphilis have quadrupled and those of gonorrhoea doubled, in gay men in 1999. The latest statistics on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the UK show the same upward pattern here. To try and divert attention from such worrying trends, gay groups are propagating the spin that AIDS is a more common problem in the straight community. One of the directors of the current advertising campaign tried to push this line with me in a recent BBC debate. If he is right, why does the National Blood Service prohibit men who have had sex with men - even just once, from donating blood? Only when this presumably irrational policy of discrimination against gay men is abandoned in the UK, will I be inclined to give credence to the claims of gay advertising executives.

Alongside the much higher risks of anal cancer and STIs, anal intercourse also involves another excess risk to health in the form of drug abuse. Male homosexuals commonly use amyl nitrate (poppers) to relax the anal sphincter to facilitate intercourse. Viagra is often used with it as a recreational drug - a combination that can kill. Rates of other drug misuse are widely acknowledged to be higher in the gay community. In

his book 'State of the Queer Nation', gay journalist, Chris Woods, states 'the fleeting nature and instability of many gay and lesbian relationships and the poorly defined rules of cruising mean that that drug consumption, ... plays an important role in our social habits. Studies have reported that gay men and lesbians are often unable to have sex unless using drugs of some nature...'

It is no surprise that studies from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Australia, USA and Canada all unanimously indicate that male homosexual activity leads to a shortened average lifespan - probably of the order of 10%. As far back as 1997 the *International Journal of Epidemiology* reported 'although we have revealed that the life expectancy of gay and bisexual men has sustained a tremendous deficit relative to all men, the true effect is likely to be larger because of problems of under reporting and underdiagnosis of AIDS'.

A few years ago when columnist Anne Atkins courageously drew attention to this fact, the Press Complaints Commission upheld a complaint against her saying there was no scientific evidence to support it. Philip Morris still refuses to acknowledge that there is any scientific evidence to support the relationship between passive smoking and lung cancer. Their 1996 advertising campaign for example claimed that passive smoking posed a lower risk to health than eating one biscuit a day. *The British Medical Journal* commented, 'The tobacco industry capitalises on the situation to protect its commercial interests through the promotion and magnification of confusion. The industry is guarded about its real knowledge on the health damaging effects of smoke and tries to influence opinion through... intimidation of its opponents.' The commercial interests promoting gay sex use similar techniques.

In the 1950s, most doctors were reluctant to accept the evidence linking lung cancer with smoking. This is now generally attributed to wish bias; doctors who smoked wanted to conceal from themselves the fact that their enjoyable habit was damaging their health. Those who didn't smoke did not want to make the smokers feel bad. It usually takes several decades for the truth to emerge from the suffocating blankets of personal compromise and political correctness.

It cannot be hidden forever though. 'Wisdom is proved right by its results', Jesus said. (Matthew 11:19 NEB) The results of anal intercourse surely prove it far from wise.

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