GROUP MEETING (4 participants) 10.05.96 age range: 25-38

Everyone present were familiar with SGHP but were not really aware of what it was about. They thought that the stall at the club was the extent of the project's activities and run in conjunction with Cork Aids Alliance. Everyone was familiar with all the information leaflets etc. and had seen and read most of the literature.

Sexual practices had changed, but there a danger of people becoming complacant, especially since the 'plague' had not happened, and initial forecasts of rates of infection and deaths from AIDS were exaggerated. Too much emphasis is placed on HIV and not enough information available on STDs in general, it was felt that instances of STDs were higher than those of HIV.

The safer-sex message had come across and most felt very pleased at the response of the gay community. It was felt that those just coming out (regardless of age) were more lax in their approach to safer-sex, while those who were 'out' felt more in tune with themselves and the consequences of unsafe-sex.

Three had used the STD clinic and had doctors with whom they could be honest.

One had a negative experience recently, he had a throat infection with swollen glands, his doctor did not directly ask him about HIV but asked him all sorts of leading questions about his lifestyle. He was refered by letter to a specialist who was sympathectic and with whom he felt he could honest. He felt that he was not ready to be tested for HIV but would if he was advised to do so. In the end the infection was not HIV related and has since completed cleared up. It seems that in the letter of referral his doctor had used a medical term that actually means 'questionable lifestyle'. At the time he felt quite angry but now in hindsight he sees how that the fact he had swollen glands would have been cause for concren. He continues to practice safer-sex and does not want to know his HIV status.

Two had the Hep. B. vaccine, the others would now consider it.
Everyone had got their condoms from the club, had no need to buy them from other outlets, and rarely used them anyway!

RE: 'SAHG PACK'
Good design, everyone knew the contents, didn't really understand why the term 'shag' had to be used, saw nothing wrong with 'condom pack'. Would probably feel a little shy about asking for a 'shag pack' please! It was also time for a change of colour. Despite the serious message the information came across in a positive way.
RE: NEW PACK
Everyone had seen the vending machine, liked the colours, saw it as a positive image. The new pack was nice and bright but awkward to carry around, and would be quite willing to pay £1. Everyone were pleased that the condoms and lube were distributed in this way.

CRUISING:
Everyone had at some time cruised, but not in Cork and not in recent years. One sometimes has a quick walk around on his way home (he lives on Summer Hill, and that's the truth, he insisted that is was noted!), this would be infrequent and he doesn't hang around very long. When he did meet someone they were usually a 'little strange' and would not be inclined to bring them home. The feeling was that there were a huge number of men out there who were very isolated and targeting the cruising areas was one way of reaching out to these people.

DISCUSSION GROUPS:
They were glad of the opportunity to express their opinions, but would be reluctant to join any group, who would be there? what was to be discussed? They would feel uncomfortable in the presence of strangers.

HEALTH WEEKEND:
Reaction was not positive. The consensus was that people would seek help if something was wrong. They considered themeselves informed and aware and couldn't really grasp the concept of a health workshop and how it could benefit them.

CLUB:
Music generally not good, DJs play music for themselves and a few friends, who all tended to be on some kind of stimulant! The crowd were not catered for, all 'rave' and any requests were ignored (with the exception of John who always played a good cross section of music). The play-list seems to be aimed at the 18-20 when the majority of the crowd were over 25. The music played can make the differance between a good and bad night at the club. No ventilation on the downstairs area, can become very hot and uncomfortable.

COMMENTS:
I felt that the debate never really got off the ground, they were very shy about expressing an opinion and only did when encouraged to do so, this could be because two of the group were in a long-term relationship and seemed to be generally out of touch.
When I tried to get people involved I came across a lot of apathy.There was some initial interest but they became less enthusiastic when I tried to arrange an evening. It seems that people like the idea but are reluctant to get involved.
I feel that I have exhausted my list of friends and acquaintances.

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