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Doctors prepare for big increase in AIDS

By STEVE BRENNAN,

IRISH MEDICAL experts are gearing up for a dramatic rise in the number of AIDS victims here over the coming months.

"We will get a lot of cases and a lot of suspected cases of AIDS", warned Professor Irene Hillery, head of the microbiology department in U.C.D. — the country's AIDS monitoring centre.

The disease—Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome—is spread through the blood and had been particularly associated with homosexuals. It is estimated to have killed as many as 200,000 people world-wide.

And doctors fare that unless a cure is found it will become the plague of the modern world.

Professor Hillery said they were now sending only apparently definite cases of Irish AIDS cases to Britain for testing. Her laboratory is not equipped to test blood samples for the disease so they must send them to London.

So far only three cases have been identified here. Two have left the country and a third is a haemophilia sufferer who contracted the disease through an imported blood transfusion.

But with a possible incubation period of up to four years experts actually hear that a huge amount of cases may currently be incubating in this country.

Professor Hillery said her reat fear was that AIDS would hit the Irish drug addict population, which used communal needles to inject narcotics.

She feared it was only a matter of time before the killer disease struck the drug victim sector with terrible consequences.

But Professor Hillery stressed that the current wave of panic among paramedical personnel about catching the disease from AIDS victims was totally without foundation.

However, as the wave of AIDS panic spreads, Professor Hillery said she was now expecting at least one suspected AIDS case per day to arrive for sampling at the university lab.

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