TAPE 70

I: Okay, um in this interview I will ask you to talk about AIDS. I want you to know that you don't have to answer all my questions. If you don't want to answer a question, just let me know and I will go on with the next one. You can also ask me to stop the interview at any time.

In this interview you will be asked to talk about AIDS. Um, talk about everything you know about AIDS. I will first ask you to tell me everything you know about AIDS. Then I will ask you some more specific questions. I may ask the same question more than once. I do this to make sure that you tell me everything you know and that I understand everything you say. Please don't worry about whether your answers are right or not. Just tell me everything that comes to mind. You don't have to talk about yourself or your behavior. No one else will hear the tape but myself and the other researchers at CMU and we will not be reporting to the people here what you said.

My first question is: Please tell me everything you know about AIDS.

S: Well, the most that I know about AIDS, you can get it through sexually transmitted diseases, come in contact with needles or any blood transfusions. Things like that. Um, there's not too much that I know but there's a lot of things that I think about AIDS, you know and there's like, there's a lot of facts about it, too, like as far as sexual partners, if you think you're only sleepin' with one person, well you only slept with two people in your life that you're really sleeping with everybody that they slept with and everybody they slept. You know it's like a chain reaction thing.

I: Mm-hum.

S: That's the way I feel about that. But I think most people get AIDS as far as drugs and sex as far as gay men, things like that. You know. And I also I really don't know whether it's true or not, but it's a man-made disease. You know, um it it's just like a lot of different things about how AIDS got here like AIDS came from a monkey you know and then it came from a man who made it and transplanted it into another man as far as blood transfusions. And that's just about it.

I: Okay. Okay. Um, alright, you told me that AIDS is passed on when you have um uh sex. Can you tell me more about that?

S: Well, it's just like I say you know. You have sex with like two like two people, maybe not even all your life but as far as you know, well, 'I only had sex with two people' you know it's caused from not using a condoms, or whatever, proper protection. Um, you know I know you get it from uh semen, it's carried through semen...and it lives it's just like a virus you know, carry inside you, comes inside your body through semen and it's spread out as a virus and um you know you'll, also if you're pregnant it's possible chance your child could have it, too.

I: Mm-hum.

S: But, what I don't understand is or what I do I I say I see it more like women are more in danger of catching AIDS than men, as far as they're more open. Females are more open than males, you know. So they have a better chance of catchin' it than a male does.
I: Mm-hum.

S: So, it's just like females are more likely to catch it 'cause they're open and males are as far as sex, than males are more likely to catch it another way. They can catch it sexuall too, but it's harder.

I: Mm-hum. Okay. Uh, what about needles, you said needles and drugs. Um, um can you tell me more about how AIDS is passed on with needles?

S: Like if you used a dirty needle, like if I was to stick a needle in you and don't clean it, and then stick a needle in me, then it could be passed on through that, you know. Um, that's that's basically it with the needles you know. Or if you could come across some bad blood, from the blood maybe but you know how they test it or you know but also AIDS they say like if you don't know, you might not have AIDS but you might have the virus HIV but they really can't detect that at its early stages either, so you know like when you go to the blood bank you could probably have the HIV virus and they just don't know, so it's still not really safe.

I: Mmm. Okay. Um...okay...does it matter how often a person has sex or shares needles or has a gets a blood transfusion?

S: No. It could be your first time for everything.

I: Mm-hum. Okay, imagine that a person you know has sex or shares needles or gets a blood transfusion only once. What happens to a person's risk of getting AIDS if um if they have sex or share needles many times?

S: Sometimes it could be just the same...same risk. You know you can just come in contact one time that's just like being preg, getting pregnant. Could be your only first time having sex and you're pregnant.

I: Mm-hum.

S: So that could be your first time you come in contact with a bad needle... it's just a first time bad experience.

I: But if they do it many times, um what happens to a person's risk of getting....

S: Greater your risk.

I: You think it would be greater?

S: Mm-hum. (yes) That's just like hanging yourself, you know? You put a noose around your neck and you keep trying and keep trying and you finally climb up on that chair and then you jump.

I: Um, can you tell me how a person can prevent getting um HIV or AIDS if they're sharing needles or having sex or getting a, or getting a blood transfusion?

S: Well, as far as sharin' needles, you know that's what you choose to do, then do it properly, you know like they got different pack different little package or whatever to tell
you how to clean needles. Everybody gives them out. You walk downtown and they tell you how to clean, you know, there's a lot of people there's I I say like this...there's too much information as far as what's out, there's too much preventable information. You can clean your needles with bleach and water you know. That's that's the that's like the most way I see it.

I: Mm-hum.

S: Like in hospitals they have different antiseptics or whatever to clean it with as far as needles. As far as sex, if you're a female or a male....condoms, foam, things like that.

I: Mm-hum.

S: You know. Not no birth control pill. That only keeps you from pregnancy and that don't help.

I: Mm-hum.

S: But um...blood transfusions...if it's something that you need....I feel it's like if it's something you need immediately your best bet is to go with a family member that you know and you could basically trust. It's all about trust when I feel it's with blood transfusions. Like if you need blood or something you know you shouldn't just get it from anybody you know just try to keep it in the family, then that way you know what what you're comin' in contact with you know, 'cause it's a family member and you know them, but other than going to somebody in the street that you don't know, 'well I don't really even know this person. This is just somebody's name that's on this tube. Should I trust it you know?' And you know your family member better than that, hopefully they're kept going to their HIV/AIDS tests every six months or whatever. But if you got to get it right away then go with a family member and if not keep testing that blood until you know for a fact that blood is clean you know. And I think the doctors you know should feel that way too.

I: Um, what do you think may lead a person to um have sex or share needles?

S: Mmm. Well as far as sex, feelings you know some some people be drunk when they have sex you know, it just happens like they say. You know a lot of things lead to sex, you know anger, you know just a lot of things especially for younger females, too. 'Cause a lot of young females is getting AIDS and a lot of young females is the older males that git into these younger females and they feel as though 'this is a older man looking at me uh well hey you know I'm gonna give 'em what I got'. Meanwhile he's givin' you what he got. And as far as needles you know maybe it was a peer pressure thing.

I: Mm-hum.

S: Most you know there's teenagers that use needles, but mostly you hear about older people like you know adults...

I: Mm-hum.

S: ...using needles or whatever and they do it I guess 'cause of their habit, I really can't you know I never had no contact with no person who uses needles. But I guess it's like a
habit and their habit is so bad they don't really think about cleaning it. They don't think about the precautions they're just thinking about gittin' it into their body.

I: Mm-hum. Okay. Um, imagine that a person goes out and they're planning not to have sex or you know use needles or share needles. What do you think may mess up these plans?

S: Uh...bad news...something just might go wrong and it just might be that some people they don't plan to do it but they some people does it as far as the needles, they probably have problems or whatever and they just be like, "pssh, this is the last straw. I might as well try it. You only live once." you know 'what else could go wrong?' Meanwhile that's all they think, 'what else could wrong?' But they don't really think about what else could really go wrong. They don't stop and say, 'oh well. I can get AIDS if I do this.' They don't think, they be like, 'oh, well, forget it, why why why should I care?' you know some people they just might be fed up...

I: Mm-hum.

S: Or some people might just try it, just to try it you know?

I: Mm-hum.

S: Sometimes you don't really know what's goin' through people's minds.

I: Mm-hum. Um, what what effects does alcohol have on people?

S: Dependin' if it's a chemical dependency. You know if it's somebody who's a real drinker you know they might seriously do something to hurt somebody. 'cause when you're intoxicated you don't think about what you're doin'. You don't you know you don't have no consciousness as far as thinkin' you know. Your mind is like playin' tricks on you. It's like something's in there tellin' you do it, do it. It's like the devil on your shoulder. That bottle is that devil. You know. It has a serious effect on people, sometimes worse on females because females go through a lot as it is, you know as far you know depression and whatever. They might be depressed and just drink their way. You could kill yourself, you could kill somebody else, you know a lot of things. Alcohol could lead into AIDS as far as sex. You might be drunk and your friend get together, you'll have unprotected sex and something happens.

I: Does drinking make much of a difference in a person's risk of getting AIDS?

S: It it can it does, you know. 'cause you probably would experience and do things that you normally wouldn't do like a lot of people get drunk and get a tattoo. They don't go to the tattoo shop and get it either. They'll just do it. You might be doin' that with a dirty needle 'cause you know I've seen a lot of people do it. Sit there, 'well, here, now you did yours, I'm gonna do mine' and they don't never, they don't clean the needle or nothing they just go on and do it. You know, so you don't think.

I: Mmm. Is the risk um different for people who drink a little bit every day compared to people who drink a lot every weekend? The risk of getting AIDS? Is it different, do you think?
S: I don't really think so 'cause if you think about it what's the difference between all week and a weekend? You can probably do a lot more on the weekend than you could just as much as you can do all week, you feel as though, 'well, I got to drink for the week. I didn't drink all week, I'm gonna drink for the week on the weekend.'

I: Mm-hum.

S: Then people when they drink every day they don't...'I drank yesterday' you know probably you drink lighter or just as much as they did the day before.

I: Does it matter how often a person is exposed to uh HIV virus?

S: Exposed to it as far as bein' around a person?

I: Mm-hum. (Yes.)

S: No nothing less you're doin' somethin' wrong as far as havin' sex with this person. But if you're in natural contact I don't really see nothing wrong. But there is some a couple of things I think about, like they don't know really how the virus started and how do they know that once the virus hit the air it dies. If it can hit the air for a certain amount of minutes, long enough to where you can catch it. You know, 'cause a lot of people say well, 'where did I go wrong? What did I do? My partner, he doesn't have sex. The partners I had, they they don't they don't have the AIDS virus. What what what happened, you know?' Like as far as sittin' on toilet seats with somebody....I don't think you can get it that way but as far as somebody sneeze on you or something like if you notice if you can catch a cold from somebody else as far as the air, how you know that you can't catch AIDS like that? 'cause it is a virus.

I: Can you tell me what happens uh when a person gets infected with the AIDS virus?

S: When they get the AIDS virus...the actual AIDS virus?

I: Yeah. When they get infected with the virus.

S: Mmm. I never really seen them but I've seen a couple you know videos or stuff about AIDS you know they get weak, their immune system gets weak or whatever. They don't, I think they're they had too many white cells white blood cells or something like that. And they started gettin' sores on their bodies you know they get older and weaker. They grow old quick.

I: Mm-hum.

S: They look like they're just aging real fast. And they get real sick real easy. If they be in the sun too long, that can harm them. They can have heat stroke easily. They have to watch their diet. A lot of things they used to eat, they can't eat like a lot of their fried foods, they gotta bake it. Eat more fruits and juices and eat more vegetables and things like that.

I: Mm-hum. Um, can you tell me about what happens when a person develops AIDS?
S: When they develop AIDS? I think it's just the same process but it just get worse and their chance of dyin' is they're they're they have more of a chance to die, like tomorrow's not promised to them.

I: Mm-hum. Okay. Um, how can someone learn whether he or she has AIDS?

S: Blood testing.

I: Okay. Um, what does this test test for? Do you know how it works?

S: No. I never you know I know that it's something they look at your cells or whatever but I really you know...

I: Okay. Why would someone decide to be tested?

S: 'Cause you never know. You could be walkin' around and have it. You never know. You just have the virus, you just won't know.

I: Mmm.

S: And they, a lot of they tell you is you're suppose to it would be right if you would be tested. You don't HAVE to, but it's just all up to you.

I: Okay. Um, what would make you think that a person has AIDS or HIV?

S: You really can't tell. I donít think you can, you can look at a person and say well you have AIDS. You can't tell unless that person is seriously in like the fatal stages of it. Til like the end, then you can say 'oh my'. You can tell they have some if you know the signs or whatever then you can tell that person has AIDS. Like like maybe by the sores. But other than that you wouldn't be able to tell, look like just like a person's just sick.

I: Okay. Um, what kinds of people have a lot to worry about from AIDS?

S: What kinds of people?

I: Mm-hum.

S: Very sexually active people that don't believe in in protection. People who use needles you know. Even people who work in hospitals. They have a seri....., you know. They they can just come across something bad, get a cut on their hand and be around a patient that's bleedin' or something and they have it, you know. And they was only doin' their job. You know. A lot of people um probably even construction workers, they bleed a lot. They might bleed on each other, you know. It depends on what type of work you do.

I: Uh, what when can people stop worrying about AIDS?

S: I don't think people never gonna stop worrying about it. 'Cause for one there's not a cure for it. So until there's a cure for it, then you can't stop worrying about it.

I: Do you think people are making too big a deal of AIDS?

S: No, 'cause it's a fatal disease.
I: Okay. Where have you learned about AIDS?

S: Just about everywhere. School. Mostly in school and here.

I: Mm-hum. Okay. Uh, what things do they skip about AIDS in uh health classes at school?

S: Nothing really, you know. They try to tell you it all because you don't really know what they're skipping if you don't know about it yourself, you know. But they just give it to you all. It's something important 'cause if you don't know then you know something it could happen to you.

I: Mm-hum. Um, do you think you know enough about AIDS to protect yourself from it?

S: Yes.

I: Is there anything more you would like to know about AIDS?

S: There's just about everything, you know. Like exactly how it really got here, you know. How it's all it's the stages from beg from start to finish, you know. Just every just about everything. You can never really know too much 'cause you don't know enough.

You know. You don't know enough about a disease to know too much. Especially when it's something that has to do with your life.

I: Right. Okay. Um, AIDS is caused by a virus called HIV. What does that tell you about AIDS?

S: What does HIV tell you about AIDS?

I: Mm-hum. The fact that it's it's caused by a virus. Does that tell you anything about it?

S: No.

I: Okay.

S: It it does it well it doesn't really tell you but it sends you to wonder if it's caused by a virus. What kind of virus? The HIV virus? Can you catch it just by touchin' something? What is it? Like a cold or whatever? You know like they say it's like a common cold, so can if I catch a cold does that mean I have HIV? You know.? A lot of people think like that.

I: Um, what does safe sex mean?

S: Safe sex? Condom. To me that's what I feel....a condom and if you're fear of pregnancy or whatever, condom and birth control.

I: Okay. Um, can you tell me more about condoms, like what are the safest condoms to use for protection against AIDS?

S: Condoms not no lambskin. It's latex condoms. Lambskin condoms, anything that has skin has pores and it breathes and it's just no good.
I: Mm-hum. 'kay. What else do condoms protect you against?

S: Sexually transmitted diseases.

I: Okay. Um, what does IV drug use mean?

S: I don't know. I it's for IV drug use um I would think it means some liquid medicine that can't, you know, that has to constantly be in your body.

I: Um, do you think needles can be cleaned?

S: Yes.

I: Okay.

S: But they're better if you can just use another one instead of using the same one over.

I: Okay. That's it for the the uh oral interview.