

Stouffville District Secondary School students answer a questionnaire on the deadly AIDS virus during an hour-long seminar at the school last Wednesday. Stouffville students were the first to hear the seminar organized by the York Region Public Health department. — Ed Rogers

SDSS hosts first seminar on AIDS

By ED ROGERS
Stouffville District Secondary School students heard some straight talk about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) last Wednesday.

The York Region Public Health office gave an hour-long slide and question-and-answer seminar on the fatal disease to students of all grades and local parents.

The seminar, presented for the first time to large groups of students in York Region, dwelled on the causes of AIDS, its symptoms and tips on preventing infection from the disease.

"AIDS is not a highly contagious disease and the spread of AIDS can easily be prevented," said public health nurse Karen Hoare to a lunch-time assembly of Grade 11 students.

She added that only two or three cases of AIDS have been reported in York Region and that the spread of the disease generally confines itself to high-risk areas.

According to the slide presentation, in 1986, 81 per cent of the 451 reported cases of AIDS in Canada were attributed to homosexual and bisexual men.

Intravenous drug use was the second high-risk area.

"The infection only starts when it gets into the blood stream,"

said Ms. Hoare. Once in the blood stream, AIDS destroys the body's immune system.

No known cure exists for the disease and testing can start only three months after suspected contact with the disease.

The test looks for antibodies the body produces once the disease has entered the blood stream. A positive result does not mean the person has AIDS but only carries the virus.

Carriers, all of whom can pass on the disease, may display no symptoms, mild symptoms, develop infections, or get the fatal "full-blown" AIDS, said Ms. Hoare and Dr. Donald Petri, a Stouffville physician, who also took part in the seminar.

AIDS was first identified after doctors diagnosed a previously unseen strain of pneumonia, said Dr. Petri. Canada had its first reported case in 1981, he added.

"If you are not engaged in risky areas (homosexuality or intravenous drug use), you probably won't be exposed to the AIDS virus," said Ms. Hoare. "No one has gotten AIDS from tears or saliva."

She added that condom use during sex lessens the chance of AIDS.

"Prevention is the only vaccine we have. Be sensible and take precautions," she said.

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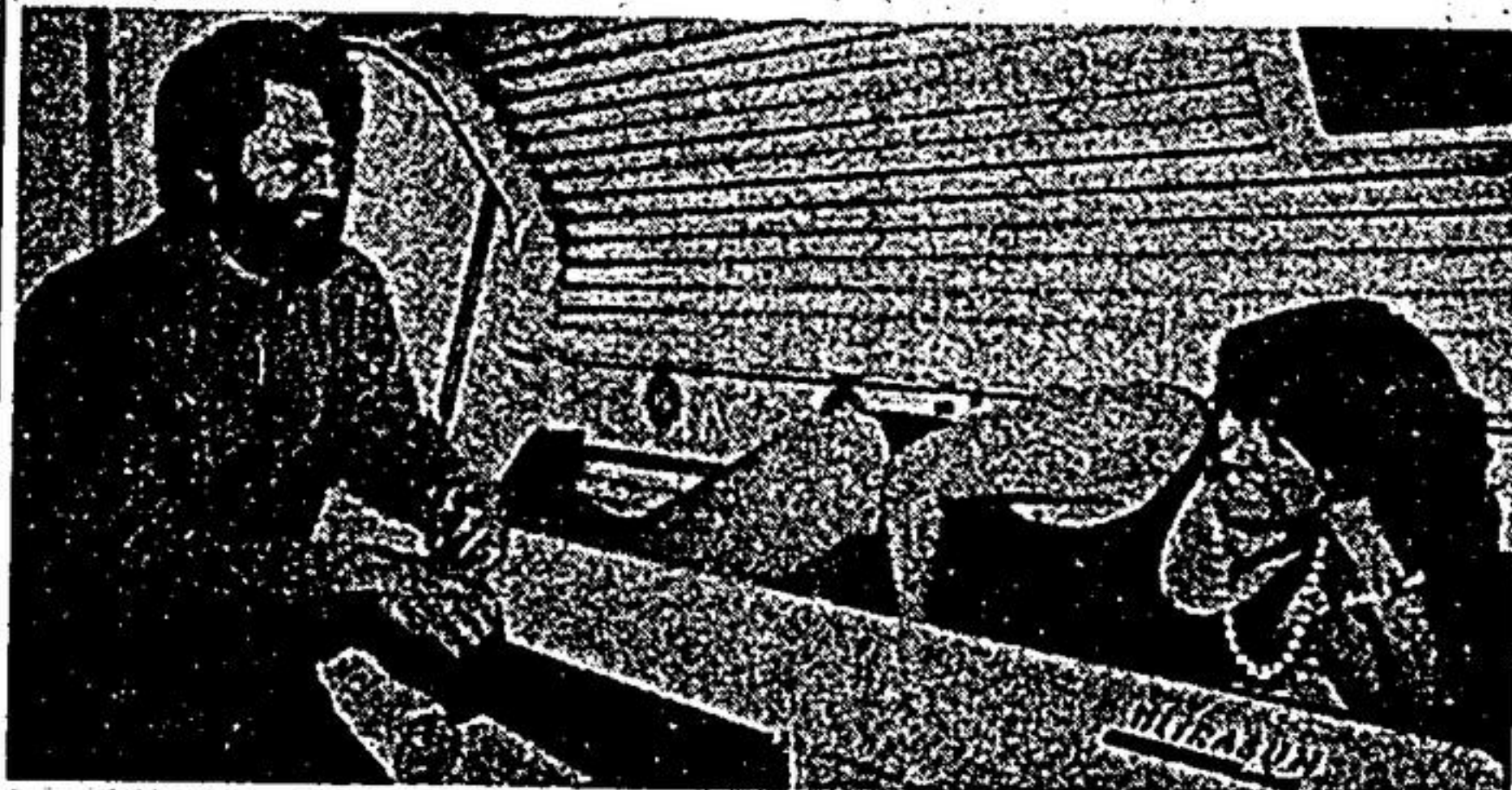
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