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Dr. Marshall Kubota, medical director of the Russian River Health Center, says 'very good studies' have found that doctors and nurses have not caught AIDS even when accidentally stuck by a needle that had been used on AIDS patients.

AIDS worries

Doctor tries to calm physicians', nurses' fears

By EILEEN KLINEMAN
Correspondent

The medical community shares with the public "primitive deep fears" of contracting AIDS from its victims, but recent case studies should ease such concerns, according to a Russian River doctor familiar with the disease.

Dr. Marshall Kubota, medical director of the Russian River Health Center, said in an interview Wednesday that "very good studies" have found that doctors and nurses have not caught the disease even when accidentally stuck by a needle that had been used on AIDS patients.

Earlier in the day, he was the opening speaker for an all-day seminar on AIDS at Community Hospital for area doctors and nurses.

Kubota said that because the

disease is new, it has aroused a "fear of the unknown" within the medical community.

"The intellectual knowledge of safety is having to combat primitive deep fears," he said.

No cure has yet been found for AIDS, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, which robs the body of its immune system and usually proves fatal.

That fact, and the disease's ability to spread, mean that caution is in order, said Kubota, who has treated a number of cases of AIDS among Guerneville's gay community.

Kubota said that while the virus believed to cause AIDS is known to be transmitted only through blood and semen, medical practitioners are advised to be "cautious regarding other secretions."

He tried to quell concerns, how-

ever, that it could be transmitted through saliva, citing studies that showed families of AIDS victims did not get the virus.

The recent death of the elderly husband of an AIDS victim aroused suspicion that it could be transmitted by kissing. But Kubota said the man died of cancer, which damaged his immune system, he did not have the virus.

Medical personnel are advised to take precautions when taking blood from AIDS patients, but studies determined that 20 hospital staffers who have stuck themselves with needles, got blood in their eyes or otherwise mingled an AIDS victim's blood with their own, did not get the disease.

"All of them remain healthy," Kubota said.

The studies "should make everybody feel a lot more comfortable," he said.