

## LOCAL &amp; STATE

HEALTH | WORLD AIDS DAY

# UM doctors targeting HIV in women

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South Florida is an epicenter for HIV in the United States. In the past, the HIV population was predominantly drug users and gay males. Today, HIV is increasingly seen in the straight population, many of them women 18 to 30.

Florida has one of the highest rates in the United States for HIV-infected women, especially new cases.

With World AIDS Day on Monday and health officials eager to combat the trend, University of Miami doctors have planted themselves in the middle of Miami-Dade communities to get people tested, promote healthy planning and conduct research on the long-term effects of the virus and what makes women more at-risk of infection.

According to the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County, one in 99 residents lives with HIV or AIDS (one in 67 males and one in 178 females).

"Through the decades of my research, women's issues always tended to be unrepresented," said Dr. Margaret Fischl, professor of medicine and director of AIDS Clinical Research Unit at UM Miller School of Medicine.



MATIAS J. OCHNER/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**WORLD AIDS DAY:** Dr. Margaret A. Fischl, professor of medicine and director of AIDS Clinical Research Unit, right, and Deborah Jones Weiss, research associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, have been spearheading the project of why women are more predisposed to getting infected with HIV.

One focus at UM is pre-conception counseling, a look at HIV-positive women's sexual behavior before they get pregnant. The project gives women the information they need if they want to have children.

"Planning is not something that people do well, HIV-positive or

negative, especially when it comes to becoming pregnant," said Dr. Deborah Jones Weiss, research associate professor in the Miller School's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences.

Another project looks at other

viruses, including human papillomavirus or HPV, the most common sexually transmitted infection that is associated with cervical cancer.

UM is conducting research and screening women for cervical, anal and oropharyngeal cancer.

"Now we are doing Pap smears to detect things like anal cancer," said Dr. Maria Alcaide, associate professor of clinical medicine at the Miller School's Division of Infectious Disease. "That's something that is not typically screened for, so UM is taking a step forward."

The team is also working on the Wash Project, a look at factors that affect how women can either acquire HIV infections or transmit infections to their partners.

Feminine hygiene such as douching can put a woman at risk for certain infections, making them more susceptible to getting or transmitting HIV, Weiss said.

"Think of the vagina as a contained environment. Some of the things that women do as part of regular feminine hygiene can change this environment, and not in a good way," she said.

Fischl believes looking at these factors as well as social behavior, whether HIV-positive or -negative, will provide insight into how to help people with HIV and to help others avoid infection.

"We actually interview people pretty intensely," Fischl said, "and it is remarkable how they feel that no one has paid attention in their lives."

HIALEAH

## Mayor seeks negotiated deal to resolve ethics complaint

• HERNANDEZ, FROM 1B

Hernandez, through a spokesman, declined to comment for this story. But in mid-November, the mayor held interviews with selected Spanish-language reporters in an apparent attempt to distract attention from his ethics complaint. Rather than address the complaint head-on, Hernandez issued a press release attacking the commission, its probe and the lead investigator, questioning "the veracity of this claim" against him.

His attorney, Thomas Co-bitz, also declined to comment, referring a Miami Herald reporter's questions to the mayor. "I can't really comment on that because of the pending litigation," Co-bitz told the Herald last week.

Rhonda Victor Sibilia, the ethics commission's spokeswoman, declined to verify the existence of a complaint against Hernandez, citing the panel's policy of confidentiality under a county ordinance.

Hernandez, mayor of Miami-Dade County's second-largest city, got into hot water with the ethics commission soon after he took the witness stand in the federal tax-evasion trial of his predecessor, Julio Robaina, in Miami federal court last April.

Robaina and his wife, Raiza, were accused of failing to report \$2 million in income, including high-interest loans to Hialeah jeweler turned Ponzi schemer, Luis Felipe Perez.

As a witness for the prosecution, Hernandez admitted that he charged illegal inter-

est rates of 36 percent — Florida law calls it "loan-sharking" — to Perez from 2007 to 2009. Hernandez testified that he collected \$100,000 in interest on a series of loans totaling \$180,000 — income that he did not report on his tax returns.

But that's not why Hernandez faces potential county ethics violations.

Under oath on the stand, Hernandez contradicted the indignant denials he had issued during the 2011 mayoral campaign when asked about his exorbitant loans to Perez. It turned out that Hernandez — a former City Council president who became acting Hialeah mayor when Robaina resigned that year to run for county mayor — had hidden information about Perez's interest payments from the public.

Back in 2011, Hernandez had angrily denounced a Herald story that reported he was paid about \$100,000 in interest by Perez, calling it an attack on his integrity. At a press conference, Hernandez maintained that Perez had only repaid him part of the principal on his loans.

But at the Robainas' criminal trial, Hernandez testified that he was paid a monthly rate of 3 percent interest — 36 percent annually — on the series of loans to Perez. He answered "Yes, sir," when questioned by prosecutor Richard Gregorie about his high-interest terms and payments.

Perez paid him \$100,000 in interest, Hernandez told the court, adding that he would have to amend his tax returns to reflect the unreported income.

Hernandez did not report

any of the payments he received from Perez on his financial disclosure forms, or on his federal tax returns from 2007 to 2009 attached to some of those forms, according to Hialeah government records obtained by the Herald.

The reason: Perez, once a friend to Hernandez, Robaina and other politicians, became a pariah after his \$40 million jewelry investment scheme collapsed in 2009 and he stopped making payments to lenders involved in Hialeah's shadow-banking business. Perez, who began cooperating with the feds and testified at the Robainas' trial, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for fraud offenses, which was later cut in half for his assistance.

At trial, the Robainas were found not guilty of all tax-evasion charges. Her-

nandez faced no charges. Prosecutors called him a witness solely to bolster their case against the Robainas.

Under federal law, interest income must be reported to the IRS even if a financial deal later goes awry. While Hernandez ultimately lost money in the shadow-banking scheme, he would not have known that when he entered into the loan agreement with Perez and began receiving interest payments.

Hernandez's tax returns were attached to the real-estate and financial-interest disclosure forms he filed with the city of Hialeah.

His 2009 tax return, from before his tenure as mayor, listed his profession as "councilman and investor." He also served as a Hialeah police officer before venturing into politics.

MIAMI BEACH

## Edition hotel designed for the 'influencers' of the world



**ACCESSORIZED:** Part of the décor of the Edition's Matador bar.

• EDITION, FROM 1B

company. He spotted the expansive, shuttered old beachfront Seville Hotel at 2901 Collins Ave. and wondered: "Why aren't we putting an Edition there?"

He started asking about the property, and the company bought the site for \$57.5 million a few months later, in July 2010, to be part of the Edition brand formed in collaboration with hotelier Ian Schrager.

For Schrager, the Edition was the opportunity to make a new splash in Miami Beach almost 20 years after opening the über-chic Delano in 1995.

"I think the Delano was a seminal event for Miami Beach 20 years ago," said Schrager, 68. "I'm lucky to be doing a new hotel in Miami at this point because I think this is another seminal thing. There's a new Miami."

Sorenson said Miami's reputation in recent years as "perhaps the most energetic and vibrantly growing city in the Western Hemisphere"



PHOTOS BY WALTER MICHOT/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

**INTIMATE:** The Matador Room's dining area at the Miami Beach Edition hotel.

made it the right place to develop the new brand after its early launch ran into the recession.

He said the thinking was: "Let's pick key cities where we know these hotels will do great, cities that are also about where the influencers in the world experience things so that they could see this quickly and obviously communicate about what they're finding."

With plenty of influencers in town for Art Basel Miami Beach, Sorenson and Schrager will officially introduce the hotel Monday afternoon.

Schrager describes the property as a "world-class tropical resort" designed to feel "intimate and glamorous" despite being stretched across 3.5 acres. Designed by Yabu Pushelberg/L.S.C. Design Studio, the large lobby is broken into clustered ar-

chitectural elements with indoor palm trees and other plants whose shadows are cast onto the ceiling.

White marble floors and gold mosaic tile columns in the lobby are true to the original building, which opened in 1955; the team was not allowed to change that part of the historic interior. While Schrager said the once-tarnished columns were the feature he was initially "most afraid of," he said they are now among his favorite parts of the hotel.

"I hated it — I was going to fight," he said. "I love the white and gold, because to pull it off and not be kind of ostentatious bourgeois, it's hard."

Chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten makes his Miami Beach debut with the upscale Matador Room and Market, a gourmet-casual

eatery with a raw bar, ceviche bar, pizza and baked goods.

Rooms are understated (Schrager calls them "bare-foot chic"), with light wood-paneled walls. Included in the 294 rooms are 23 two-story bungalows; the property also has 26 residences. Rates for a standard king room start at \$429 a night, topping out at \$10,000 a night for a bungalow penthouse.

The basement spaces are dedicated to fun: a dance club, four-lane bowling alley and a 2,000-square-foot ice-skating rink. The activities will be open to the public, at a fee (skating costs \$20 per person per half hour, while bowling after 8 p.m. will require a minimum \$50 food and beverage purchase per person per hour).

Outside, guests can choose from two swimming



**CHOICE OF POOLS:** One of the two swimming pools at the Edition. A private sandy area is also available.

pools and a private sandy area set up for casual picnics and movie nights.

"I want to do something really great," Schrager said. "I certainly want to do something that has a bigger impact than the Delano had."

Suzanne Amaducci-Adams, head of the hospital-ity practice group at Bilzin Sunberg, called the hotel's arrival a "huge thing."

While other hotel companies are selling off their assets to focus on management-only models, she said Marriott backed up its desire to enter the lifestyle market with a significant amount of capital.

A spokeswoman for Marriott said the company paid for the development of the hotel, but would not disclose the cost. The company announced last year that it had agreed to sell three Edition hotels — including the Miami Beach property — for \$800 million to the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. The deal on the London hotel has already closed, and Miami Beach's is expected to go next.

"They refused to let it fail," Amaducci-Adams said. "Marriott invested big money, renovated the hotel. They wanted to make this investment in the brand."