

METRO NEWS

N.O. groups get \$1.6 million for AIDS program

BY JOHN POPE
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New Orleans groups will get \$1.6 million over four years from a private health-care foundation to develop a comprehensive AIDS treatment and education program.

The money will come from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation of Princeton, N.J., which awarded \$17.2 million Wednesday to groups in 11 U.S. cities and foundation officials said the grants, which apparently com-

prise the largest private donation for people with acquired immune deficiency syndrome, should ease the financial burden on urban hospitals, which care for most people with the fatal illness.

- ▶ The New Orleans program has five goals:
 - ▶ Developing a diagnostic and treatment center at Charity Hospital for people with AIDS and AIDS-related complex, a condition that might lead to AIDS.
 - ▶ Establishing a system to help coordinate AIDS activities and agencies and to keep track of AIDS patients.
 - ▶ Providing comprehensive nurs-

ing services, including home care.

- ▶ Mounting an educational program to let people know how the disease is spread and how to avoid it.
- ▶ Getting more money for the AIDS program so it can continue when the grant runs out.

"Considering the economic situation of the city and state, we would not be able to provide these services without the grant," said the Rev. Paul H. Desrosiers, pastoral director of Associated Catholic Charities.

That organization will administer the grant. The first installment should arrive around Nov.

1, said Dr. Ted Wisniewski, vice chairman of NO/AIDS Task Force, the principal anti-AIDS organization in New Orleans.

Associated Catholic Charities will hire eight full-time employees to run the activities the grant covers, he said.

Helping run the project will be the Metropolitan Area Advisory Committee, a new organization with about 40 members representing a cross-section of New Orleans and AIDS-related groups, said Dr. Michael Kaiser, its chairman.

The 21 U.S. cities with the most AIDS cases were eligible to

compete for the money. According to the state Department of Health and Human Resources, New Orleans ranks 17th on that list, with 184 of the state's 303 cases.

The other grant recipients are New York; Atlanta; Dallas; Seattle; Miami; Newark, N.J.; Jersey City, N.J.; Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Palm Beach County, Fla.; and Nassau County, N.Y.

The Johnson foundation has given out more than \$700 million since 1972 to improve health care, according to a news release.

Though some other diseases claim more people than AIDS, no

disease in recent memory has so challenged our political, social and health-care institutions," said Dr. Leighton E. Cluff, the foundation's executive vice president.

"The foundation hopes to demonstrate . . . that our society can respond more compassionately and more effectively to this disease until . . . a cure or an effective treatment is developed."

AIDS, which has no cure, is caused by a virus that devastates the immune system, making its victims vulnerable to infectious that eventually kill them.