

# Pennsylvania Coalition of Professional Tattooists & Body Piercers Newsletter

In  
Unity  
There  
Is  
Strength!

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2000

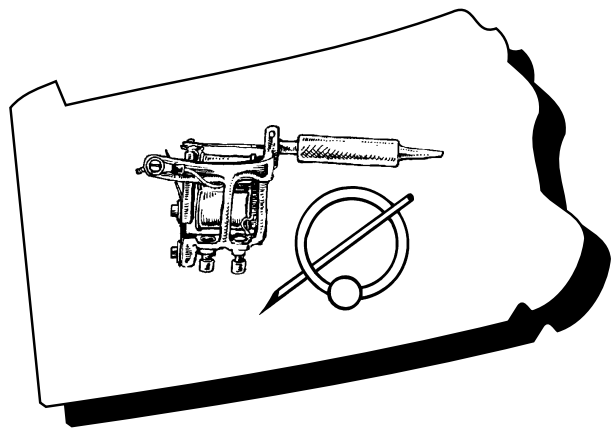
## I N S I D E !

- Three New Bills on the Table for '99/'00•
- New Version of the Coalition Petition•
- The HepC Connection Advertisements•



### IN MEMORY OF...

It is with great sadness that I must report the passing of Guy Asper (Big Daddy's Tattoos, Pittsburgh) on June 5, 1999. Guy was 32 years old and leaves behind a wife (Beth) and three children (Guy, Erin and Otto). The Coalition made a donation in Guy's name to the Mario Lemieux Cancer Fund. If anyone else would like to make an additional donation, you may mail them to the Mario Lemieux Cancer Fund, 920 Forbes Duquesne Boulevard, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.



*Coalition Hotline:*

412•531•5319

<http://tattoopgh.com>

# Editor's Notes

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My apologies for the lagtime in this newsletter - it was one of those wild and wooly summers which gave way to fall and winter and not one newsletter! The good news is that things have been quite on the legislative front (the main reason for not producing newsletters - nothing to report). While we are tracking three (3) new bills in the House and Senate, none of them have had any action since being introduced in the first months of 1999. That's not to say that things won't change once Congress is back in session in late January 2000, but I check their status weekly so that we stay informed.

- We did have a meeting (which you all should have received an announcement about) at the Pittsburgh tattoo convention on Sunday, October 31, 1999. It was a quick meeting in which we discussed the three new bills in the 1999-2000 session and handed out copies of the new **Coalition petition** (see enclosed).
- The organizers of **Forged in Ink** have once again been kind enough to donate space to the Coalition for our next meeting. The date will be **Sunday, April 2, 2000 @ 10AM**. The convention is being held at the **Sheraton Berkshire Hotel**, 1714 Paper Mill Road, Reading, PA. I'll mail a reminder notice at the end of February. **Forged in Ink** is being held **March 31-April 2, 2000** - call 1-888-290-TAT2 for complete event information.
- For those of you who didn't make it to either of the last two meetings (Pittsburgh, October 1999 and Valley Forge, March 1999) - there are currently three active bills in Congress that relate to tattooing and/or piercing.

**House Bill 611** - This is basically a reincarnation of House Bill 332 from the 1997-98 session. As a matter of fact, it's almost a direct copy of it's predecessor. It was introduced February 22, 1999, to the Committee on Health and Human Services where it remains today.

**House Bill 347** - Another rebirth from the 97-98 session, this bill calls for a change to the Criminal Code, making it illegal to tattooing anyone under the age of 18 without "expressed consent" of the parent or legal guardian. Not a big deal as most of us follow this stipulation anyway, although the state would determine what constitutes "expressed consent" and most likely have a specified form and some type of reporting procedure in place. This was referred to the Committee on Judiciary on February 8, 1999, and remains there.

**Senate Bill 532** - This is a clone of that nasty bill from 97-98 that would amend the Medical Practice Act of 1985 and place tattooing and piercing under the supervision of the State Medical Board. As we've discussed in the past, we all know how most doctors feel about body modification and there's no mention of any professional participation to represent our interest! This bill was referred to Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee on March 9, 1999, where it remains.

- You may have received calls at your studio in reference to a commercial that has been running on broadcast television which lists tattooing and/or piercing as possible ways to contract hepatitis C. **The Hep C Connection** (based in Denver, Colorado) has produced and sponsored these ads - this may only be a Western Pennsylvania issue, but my guess is that since the Hep C Connection is a national organization, these ads are most likely running across the country in most major cities. The concern here is that the public service announcement is very vague in its explanation of the disease, and in particular the possible risks presented by tattooing and piercing. There's no qualification about the risk coming from "non-sterile" settings and no mention of the sterile chain of events that take place in a professional studio. All of this leaves the general consumer to believe that by simply getting a tattoo or piercing, they have exposed themselves to the hepatitis C virus!

I was able to speak with a **Hep C Connection** representative about this matter. I explained our situation here in Pennsylvania and how detrimental this could be to our efforts at this time. Mr. Straface agreed with my concerns and drafted a letter (copy attached) to help explain the intent of the ad and allay any fears. While it's not the most eloquent letter, it serves it's purpose. Mr. Straface also agreed to take this matter to his superiors and look into having the ad changed to more accurately explain the situation - i.e., "hepatitis C can be contracted from non-professional tattooing and/or piercing." No word as of yet, but I'll keep checking on it.

- For all you web junkies, here's the **PA General Assembly's** web site address - you can track, view and print all current legislation and even check the **Senate and House Committee** schedules for public hearings on specific legislation...

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/>

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## Using the New Petition

The petition on the following page is for you to collect signatures in opposition to House Bill 611 (and any other legislation in regards to tattooing/piercing). Writing a personal letter to a Senator is the best way to communicate, but I know how hard it is to encourage people to write. This is the next best thing! Make as many copies as you need, or call me and I'll send you a stack. Keep the petition with a copy of HB 611 in your waiting room and encourage every customer to read the bill and sign the petition (encourage them to write a letter, if you can!). Be sure to answer any questions they might have. As you fill sheets, you can mail them to me or hang on to them and turn them in at the next meeting. The petitions worked wonderfully with House Bill 332 and we want to do this same with HB 611 - so collect as many signatures as you can! *There are two important rules - 1.) Everyone who signs the bill should be a Pennsylvania resident; 2.) Everyone who signs the bill should be at least 18 years old (voting age). You should also know that any false information will nullify a petition (even if it's only one signature in 10,000).*

# Tattoo Studio's & Disease Transmission

By Hoag Levins, Reprinted from The Haddon Herald and TattooArtist.com

## NO CASE OF AIDS TRANSMISSION EVER DOCUMENTED IN A U.S. TATTOO STUDIO - Statistics Show Lower Hepatitis Risk in Tattoo Shops than in Dentists' offices

The health risks associated with commercial tattooing are often exaggerated when individuals or groups mount campaigns to prohibit the opening of a community's first tattoo shop, according to news accounts from across the U.S.

During the last ten years, according to U.S. News & World Report, tattooing has become one of America's fastest growing categories of retail business. There are now an estimated 15,000 tattoo studios in operation as the once-taboo practice of body-marking continues to gain broader acceptance and popularity throughout mainstream society.

As part of this cultural change, growing numbers of professional tattoo artists are opening — and attempting to open — studios in middle-class cities and towns that have never had such establishments in their business districts.

## Inaccurate Risk Allegations

Reports indicate that the ensuing public debate routinely includes grossly inaccurate pronouncements about the alleged health risks of tattooing. Some local newspapers and TV stations have implied or suggested in their reports that tattooing may involve unusually high risks related to the transmission of such diseases as AIDS and Hepatitis.

Letters to the editor in some publications have often flatly stated that tattoo shops are major sources for AIDS and Hepatitis. For instance, one recent letter to a community newspaper in southern New Jersey charged that tattooing was involved in "the terrible price paid by loss of human life to AIDS" and went on to mention Hepatitis in a similar manner.

In response, local New Jersey tattoo artist Patrick Levins wrote: "While I understand how the debate about America's shifting cultural attitudes toward tattooing can get emotional, I think responsible citizens will agree it's important to address such health issues factually and logically."

## Federal Disease Experts

One place where local

citizens and journalists can find authoritative information about the epidemiology — or the transmission and risk — of AIDS and Hepatitis is the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

CDC is the nation's foremost authority on communicable diseases. It plays the leading role in investigating and documenting the patterns and causes of AIDS and Hepatitis throughout the United States. Headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., the CDC maintains a large World-Wide Web site ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) on which it regularly publishes and permanently archives in-depth information about its findings. It also makes its data available for free to newspapers, local libraries, public health agencies and any local government official or citizen who requests it.

CDC categorizes tattooists as "personal service workers" along with hairdressers, barbers, manicurists, acupuncturists, and massage therapists. Since the early 1980s, this category of workers has received intense scrutiny in ongoing CDC investigations of how the HIV virus that causes AIDS is spread.

## Brief but Dramatic: CDC AIDS Data

The CDC summary data about tattooing and HIV is as brief as it is dramatic. In its HIV/AIDS Surveillance Reports, CDC has consistently noted that it has documented "no cases of HIV transmission through tattooing" anywhere in the country since it began tracking such data in 1985 [1]. By comparison, there have been at least 7 cases of HIV transmission associated with dentists and dental workers.

## Hepatitis: More Dentists Than Tattoos

About hepatitis: Of the 13,387 annual cases of hepatitis detailed in the most recent CDC report, 12 are associated with tattoo studios. By comparison, 43 cases — or better than 300% more — are associated with dental offices [2]. Both numbers would appear to represent low levels of hepatitis risk — a risk that has been further reduced by new safety procedures required of both dental offices and tattoo studios.

Some political pundits have noted that, given the statistics, community activists who are sincerely concerned about the potential spread of AIDS or hepatitis would do better to concentrate on local dentists rather than local prospective tattoo shop operators.

Other observers point out that while it is important to be vigilant for potential community health problems, there is no documentable basis to support public allegations that the process of contemporary commercial tattooing is an unreasonably disease-prone one.

[1] The HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report is published regularly by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The most recent, published in December, 1997, is entitled "Estimated incidence of AIDS and deaths of persons with AIDS, adjusted for delays in reporting, by quarter-year of diagnosis/death, United States, January 1985 through June 1997."

[2] Hepatitis Surveillance, Report Number 56, April, 1996, Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Micky Sharpz Machines

New Micky Sharpz machines available - choose from all models! Short turn-around time. Contact Bob Stern for details at [restattoo@netreach.net](mailto:restattoo@netreach.net) or leave a message at 215-795-0557.

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NEW PETITION INSIDE!

 **NOTICE OF NEXT MEETING** 

**Sunday, April 2nd, 2000 @ 10:00 AM**  
***Sheraton Berkshire Hotel, Reading, Pennsylvania***

*This meeting will be held in conjunction with the Forged In Ink Tattoo Convention.*

*Please call if you need directions.*

**Please RSVP Attendance by Monday, March 27th, 2000!**

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