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PRESS RELEASE

1991 SEPTEMBER 23RD

CODE OF ETHICS IN INFORMATION

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PRESS RELEASE ON THE TELEVISION PROGRAMME
"LE DROIT DE SAVOIR" ("THE RIGHT TO KNOW")
DEVOTED TO RESEARCH ON IMMUNOTHERAPY

The National AIDS Council has taken note of the documentary on the treatment of AIDS using immunotherapy, broadcast by TF1 on September 12, 1991 on Patrick Poivre d'Arvor's programme "Le droit de savoir". The National AIDS Council deeply deplores the fact that extreme, highly edited and misleading statements may well have left viewers, especially those living with AIDS, with the impression that a "miracle" treatment exists.

Pr. Zagury's preliminary work is controversial in scientific circles, and grave reservations have been expressed regarding it by Pr. Jean-Paul Lévy, director of ANRS, who was given the task by Bruno Durieux, Minister of Health, of evaluating its scientific soundness. His reservations relate to the methodology used, the excessive risks incurred by volunteers, and the failure to abide by experimental protocols previously submitted to the Comité consultatif national d'éthique [National Ethics Advisory Committee], for its approval.

Based as it is on the deeply moving personal testimony of four patients being treated by Prof. Zagury and who place all of their hope in the treatments offered by the latter, a manipulation of the doctor-patient relationship is at the core of the programme. The programme, by tending to present Pr. Zagury as an unfairly slandered quasi-mystical saviour, could only raise false hopes, and, by the same token, even greater anguish for individuals already in a situation of very great distress. The National AIDS Council wishes to protest against such blatant misinformation. It considers that the broadcast's producers have not reflected upon the scope of their responsibilities with regard to what is a communicable disease whose probable outcome for patients is grave.

The National AIDS Council recalls that, in the fight against this disease, ensuring maximum accuracy in all information provided is invariably an absolute ethical imperative.