

L.A. billboards say AIDS a 'gay' disease

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Stunning passersby, billboards have sprung up around Southern California declaring, "HIV is a gay disease," adding the tag line "Own It; End It."

The Los Angeles Times reported Saturday that the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center, which paid for the billboards, has declared war on the fact that populations of homosexual men are slacking off in their vigilance against HIV and AIDS.

The campaign, which is also running in magazines, is a 180-degree turn from the years of politicking against stereotyping homosexuals as those most likely to become infected.

The Times said some AIDS counselors are worried the ad campaign will further stigmatize the disease and stack the deck against research funding.

Public health officials have noted that the overwhelming majority of HIV cases -- three out of four -- are among men engaging in sex with other men.

The head of the Los Angeles-based AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Michael Weinstein, denied to the Times that AIDS was a "gay" disease. "It is a disease of the immune system," he said.

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