

## The Most Common Incurable Diseases

By: Laura M. Sands

Among the most common incurable diseases are Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and multiple sclerosis. Other debilitating diseases, which have been largely eradicated or controlled in developed countries, but are still common in underdeveloped countries include polio and cholera. Incurable diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's are not necessarily deadly by themselves, but are progressive in nature and people with these conditions eventually die while still being affected by them.

Unlike rare incurable diseases like Pompe disease, which causes the heart and the body's muscles to stop working, many common incurable diseases are those that doctors have learned to treat despite being unable to cure them. Vaccines, clean hygiene methods and public health warnings have also helped keep incurable deadly diseases under control in certain parts of the world. For example, polio was once an extreme health threat in the United States and claimed many lives, but vaccinations against this disease have caused it to now be almost nonexistent in that country.

One of the most common incurable diseases, AIDS, has had a global impact and continues to regularly kill those who are stricken with it. Although it is one of the most deadly diseases in the world, a person may have AIDS for as many as 10 years without having any symptoms or without knowing he is even sick. As one of the most debilitating diseases, the symptoms of AIDS include night sweats, fever, chills, extreme weight loss and swollen lymph nodes. A person who is infected with AIDS may also contract a number of secondary illnesses as a result of a severely compromised immune system.

Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and Alzheimer's disease are examples of incurable diseases that are not necessarily deadly, but that people are afflicted with until their eventual demise. The symptoms of multiple sclerosis may vary, but it largely affects the nervous system, which results in a variety of progressive symptoms such as weakness, an unsteady gait, uncontrolled movements, slurred speech and memory loss. Parkinson's disease may also mimic some of these symptoms, as well as dementia, which is a hallmark symptom of Alzheimer's disease.

Incurable diseases like diabetes can often be controlled with medication, diet and exercise. Extreme cases of this disease, however, often result in limb amputation and a significant reduction in the quality of a person's life. Such is one of many incurable diseases that can lead to death if not properly diagnosed and treated at its earliest onset. If treated in time and properly managed, however, many people with diabetes and similar diseases can enjoy a somewhat normal life despite an illness.