

# Prostitute with HIV admits she attempted to infect her clients

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — A jailed prostitute who has the virus that causes AIDS says she deliberately tried to infect her clients as revenge for men who had abused her.

"The men that I dated, I wanted them to catch it," Deborah Johnson said.

Medical experts say men who have sex with infected women are

at a lesser risk of contracting human immunodeficiency virus — HIV — than women who have sex with infected men. Experts disagree on the probability, however. Some say that one of every 20 men could get infected; others say it's closer to one of every 500.

"My guess is, if she's met thousands of people, she's transmitted the virus," said Dr. Richard Greenberg, an associate professor of medicine in the infectious disease division at the University of Kentucky College of Medicine. "Somebody's got it."

Johnson, 28, is serving a one-year sentence at the Fayette County Detention Center. She pleaded guilty earlier this year to wanton endangerment after police arrested her for offering to perform a sex act on a man even though she knew she had the virus.

She went public with her story last week after TV and newspaper reporters interviewed inmates who intentionally committed crimes to be jailed and receive free medical treatment. Johnson said she has never intentionally gotten arrested.

The Nicholasville native said she learned she had HIV in June 1991 after she had an epileptic seizure and doctors tested her blood. Her medical history was confirmed by

records she agreed to release.

She thinks she contracted the virus by sharing drug needles. Her arms are pocked by needle scars.

Her main hangout was "The Stroll" around Lexington's Sixth and Limestone streets, an area known for prostitution, drugs and other crime.

She wouldn't tell clients she had the virus. She never asked their names or told them hers. The only

question she asked was whether a man was a police officer.

"These men shouldn't have stopped to pick me up," Johnson said. "They shouldn't have cheated on their wives or girlfriends. They don't know who they're picking up or what

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Deborah Johnson,  
jailed prostitute

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they're catching."

She said she feels remorse, but not for infecting the men.

"I feel like it is attempted murder for their wives and kids who got infected because of them," she said. "I do regret what I've done where they're concerned."

Johnson gets out of jail in March. She wants to get a housecleaning job and work with AIDS and drug groups to educate people about the dangers. She said she plans to avoid prostitution and drugs in the future.

Despite her statements about trying to infect men with the virus that causes AIDS, police and prosecutors say they cannot charge Johnson with a crime unless a victim comes forward.

"We'd have to know specifics," said Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Mike Malone. "We'd have to have a particular victim."

In 1992, the legislature made it a crime for prostitutes who know they have the AIDS virus to sell their services. It is a felony, punishable by one to five years in prison.