Crying Uncle

Brothers & Sisters spotlights HIV and aging.

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Screeching tires, breaking glass and disclosure—that was the explosive season 4 finale of ABC's drama *Brothers & Sisters*. In the hotly debated episode, Uncle Saul (played by Ron Rifkin), a senior citizen, revealed he was HIV positive.

The episode has found criticism. It portrayed Sam secretly getting an HIV test, then waiting more than 24 hours to call for the results, when today's rapid tests take 20 minutes. After receiving his HIV diagnosis, Saul denied to others he was positive, missing an opportunity to start a conversation about HIV and treatment options. Further, the show ended on a blood-phobic note with Saul pleading others not to touch him after the aforementioned car crash left him bloodied.

Despite these critiques, some advocates say the good outweighs the bad. Prime time TV is not only talking about the importance of HIV testing, but it's also acknowledging the growing population of positive people ages 50 and over.

As the show's fifth and possibly final season approaches, more questions loom. Will producers depict Saul dealing with the stigma of HIV, the issue of disclosure and the side effects that can be associated with treatment? Producers are staying tight-lipped, but they've said that next season will jump ahead one year, showing all the characters, including Saul, in dramatically different—and, we hope, healthy—stages in their lives.

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