Do Tell

April 1, 1998

On the Shelf

Black or white ... or beige, mocha, English rose

If you're hankering to hide a KS lesion or a tired tattoo, you can't do better than Dermablend Corrective Cosmetics. Be sure to buy both the cover cream and the setting powder. And with bathing-suit season upon us, it's also wise to keep leg and body cover cream on hand -- the 24-hour coverage will even survive a swim. Take extra time at the makeup counter to test which of the 11 shades best matches your skin tone. Rumor has it that Michael Jackson uses Dermablend (by the gallon) to achieve his famously even glow, but fortunately you don't have to be a pop star to afford it. Available at most department stores.

AIDSpeak

New math for PWAs

Whoever wrote *Everything I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* was obviously no PWA: These days, it takes an advanced degree just to track your viral load. If you associate log with cabin, median with strip, fold with laundry and mean with your ex, read on.

Mean: A fancy word for average. For example, consider three people who had CD4 increases of 20, 65 and 350. To find the mean, first add the three numbers: 20+65+350=435. Then divide the total number of increases by the number of people who had increases (435?to find the mean CD4 increase: 145.

Median: Like that solid yellow line down the highway, the median is in the middle. In the trio above, then, the median is 65.

Fold: The word fold is always preceded by a number. What to do with that number? Well, if it's paired with the word increase, multiply; if it's paired with the word drop, divide. So if your viral load was 2,500 and you have a threefold increase, your new viral load is 3x2,500, or 7,500. If your viral load of 75,000 had a fivefold drop, it would land at 75,000?or 15,000.

Log: This is heady stuff, so go slow. Log (short for logarithm) is the power to which 10 is raised. As with fold, it's always preceded by a number. A two-log viral load drop is your previous viral load divided by 10^2 (100), say from 3,000,000 to 30,000. And a three-log increase multiplies last

month’s measurement by 10^3 (1,000), say from 3,000 to 3,000,000.

It gets even trickier with fractional folds and logs, at which point you reach for your old slide rule. Better yet, ask your physician to call Glaxo Wellcome at 800.5.GLAXO.5, ext. 2365, and request the Viral Load Measurements and Math card.

-- George Carter

Test Your Limits

Whaddaya want from me ... blood?

Doc orders a test. At the lab, samples of your person -- blood, urine, feces, sputum, skin or hair -- are taken. The next week, doc phones with results, but it’s all white noise because you never knew what the test was for in the first place. Of course, a month later you get the -- ugh! -- lab bill.

Welcome to the wonderful world of HIV, where tests can require inserted tubes, surgically removed samples or tapped spines. All of which may be necessary and will go down easier if you know why you’re being tested, how long the procedure will take and what the risks are.

The Yale University School of Medicine Patient’s Guide to Medical Tests (Houghton Mifflin /Boston), edited by Barry L. Zaret, MD, tells you all that and more. This readable reference spells out all the pluses and minuses of common and not-so-common tests, letting you know how much it’ll hurt you and your wallet. Try $40 for starters -- the cost of this book.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Do-Tell-4858-1401