Mailbox

April 1, 2001 By Staff

Bum Wrap

As a reporter who has been covering the AIDS epidemic since 1981, I was appalled that *POZ*'s January 2001 cover, "Whatever Became of the Cure?" was wrapped with an ad for Bristol-Myers Squibb's anti-HIV drug, Videx (ddI). As a result of this juxtaposition, the cover answers its own questions about the cure with "Mission Accomplished! Introducing...New Videx EC." That is beyond irresponsible. It implies that the second-oldest anti-HIV drug, ddI, is curative. It is not -- and taken alone, ddI can actually worsen the health of HIVers. Why does *POZ* -- which caters to the health and needs of people with HIV -- sell cover-wrap space to a drug company, given the complexity of HIV treatments and the vital need for patients to separate hype from reality?

-- Laurie Garrett, Newsday *Science Writer, New York City*

The January 2001 cover image and accompanying "manifesto" by Martin Delaney are intriguing. But overlaying the cover with Bristol-Myers Squibb's Videx EC ad reading "Mission Accomplished!" is both misleading and dangerous. In this era of AIDS complacency, coupling the ad with the *POZ* cover line further drives home the mistaken notion that AIDS is all but over. *POZ* knows better than most what a terrifying untruth that is. We are still a long way from Delaney's "functional cure" and must once again, as he states, make "Cure AIDS now!" the primary goal of treatment activism. Your placement of this ad moves our community further away from that goal. Remember, the drug companies are still the primary foes in preventing the creation of a successful vaccine or a cure that wouldn't mean swallowing fistfuls of pills for the rest of our lives.

-- Mark Baker, Positive/PWA Coalition, Provincetown, Massachusetts

What lack of judgment or taste was responsible for pairing "Whatever Became of the Cure?" with an advertisement reading "Mission Accomplished! Introducing...New Videx EC?" Did you really not see this? And if you did, how do you sleep at night?

-- Terry Lewis, Columbus, Ohio

I wonder if Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS) realized what a great opportunity they had to imply that their drug was the cure when they wrapped their ad around the *POZ* "Cure" cover. I realize that most readers know that the BMS drug Videx is not the cure. But putting that ad over the cover sends a subliminal and sadly erroneous bit of information to those less savvy. This should remind us all to read between the lines.

-- Gerry Hoyt, Atlanta

Congratulations on a brilliant issue (January 2001). It's really interesting to contrast your cover -- an empty medicine cabinet -- with that of another glossy HIV publication that recently featured a misleading scare poster about the dangers of structured treatment interruptions. It's high time everyone realized that getting people safely off HIV drugs is not some aspiration to luxury -- it's critical to assuring the long-term health of HIVers. Your bravery will, I suspect, place your pharmaceutical ad revenue in danger. I salute your willingness to take that risk.

-- Richard Jefferys, New York City

***POZ* responds:** *We regret the unfortunate, though entirely unintentional, equation suggested by juxtaposing the "cure" cover line with the Videx EC cover wrap. Our editorial pages (including the cover) are, of course, created independently of the accompanying ads, a strict separation that means the left hand does not know what the right is doing. Sadly, drug companies have been cutting back on their* POZ *ad pages, and cover overlays have evolved as a way to supplement our income. We will be more careful in distinguishing future covers from their wraps.*

Q Tip

I never said that Compound Q was a cure ("Care for a Cure?" January 2001). In 1989, when it first appeared and looked promising, I raised the question, "If we were to have a cure, how would we see to it that our community never allowed something like AIDS to happen again?" Now we're right back in the same position: some promising treatments and the community screwing itself all over again.

-- Larry Kramer, New York City

***POZ* responds:** *We regret misquoting the father of AIDS activism. Several staffers, however, recall Kramer on the floor of ACT UP "crowing that Compound Q might be the cure" -- as the sentence should have read.*

No Hope, No Cope

I picked up the January 2001 issue of *POZ* and couldn't read past Walter Armstrong's Editor's Letter without stopping to say, "Thank you, you've re-energized me!" I am a 28-year-old heterosexual female who was diagnosed in November 1995 when I was 23. I've had more than five years of this disease, and I'm ready to move on. In addition to my personal struggle, I'm a case manager for an HIV support organization. Often I feel alone on this boat called *Hope*, but I have too much left to do to give up: I plan to have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I need hope -- it keeps me going. We have to change the consciousness of the community in order to get over this hump. I just want to let you know that I believe!

-- Seana, San Francisco

Walter Armstrong's January Editor's Letter struck me -- especially the opening paragraph. I think I have chosen to forget the pain of the pre-HAART years -- not the friends who died, but that constant feeling of grief at losing my guys. Armstrong's words helped me put together those feelings and brought some needed tears. I cried for so many years that it almost seemed that the

tears had dried up, but we all know better.

I really appreciate *POZ*. It reaches folks in areas where the most recent information is not at hand, and it has helped me deal with my own issues regarding HIV. I tested positive in March 1988, and I'm still taking no meds. My T cell count stays around 500 and my viral load is undetectable. I live with all the fear, rejection and other issues that HIVers experience, but without the physical problems. I would love to see POZ do a story on nonprogressors like me.

-- Rick Ponds, Atlanta

Count Us In

As the person most prominently featured in the photo accompanying Tim Kingston's article about groups that send surplus AIDS medications to Third World countries ("Share the Health," December 2000), I was very disappointed that the group I volunteer for in San Francisco, the AIDS Medicine Recycling Project of the Positive Humanists and Friends, wasn't cited as a resource. Now in our third year, we work with organizations in Chile, Cuba, Kenya, Mexico and Peru and continue to assist PWAs in Argentina, Columbia, El Salvador, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa and Thailand. We can be reached at 415.285.0606, phumanists@hotmail.com or on the web at www.humanist.org/~hobi. We are particularly in need of donations of AZT and 3TC.

-- Jonathan Goldman, San Francisco

Plot or Not?

I have had HIV for 27 years. I agree with Reverend Louis Farrakhan and Boyd Ed Graves: It's a form of genocide ("The Secret Plot to Destroy African Americans," December 2000). It kills the undesirables. When there are no wars, populations grow. There won't be enough food to feed the world in the future, so population control is needed. Which population? The government knows, and so do I.

-- Preston White, Broad River Correctional Institution, Columbia, South Carolina

The December 2000 issue of *POZ* was full of explosive, thought-provoking information. I truly felt LeRoy Whitfield's article, "The Secret Plot to Destroy African Americans." I don't doubt that the government played a role in spreading HIV. But do any of us really feel that the government will admit to foul play? And if it did 'fess up, do I, a black man with AIDS, believe that admission would have a Lazarus effect on me? When I tested positive in 1992, I wanted nothing more than to be able to blame someone. But after I got back from the pity party I threw for myself (for the record, I was the only one who showed up), I had to look in the mirror and admit that I was responsible for myself.

-- Anthony T. Nelson, Mid-Orange Correctional Facility, Warwick, New York

Charitable Deduction

By divine intervention, I received a copy of *POZ*. I did not appreciate the foul language in the magazine, but God spoke to my heart about this unwelcome disease called AIDS. On behalf of all

Christians everywhere, please forgive us for the times we have been unloving and judgmental. God's word says that His people perish for lack of knowledge. Because of the unanticipated delivery of *POZ* Magazine, I now pray for healing for those afflicted by HIV and I have learned that I must show compassion and mercy whenever the opportunity presents itself. That is what Jesus would do.

-- Audrey Stump, Gainesville, Florida

Double Take

As I scan *POZ* and observe the pictures in both the ads and the articles, it seems to me that you may be doing a disservice to the awareness and prevention of HIV. Since all the photos show people who appear to be very healthy despite having HIV, doesn't the wrong message come across? For those who have not seen the ravages of AIDS firsthand, these pictures tell the young ones (or even the older ones), "If these people look this good, why should I worry?" As a result, they will see no need to change their lifestyles.

-- Laurence Taber, Madison, New Jersey

I have grown tired of reading letters every month complaining that *POZ* sells ad space to drug companies and that the models in the ads are too pretty. To those who lodge these complaints, I ask: How do you think *POZ* can afford to give away free magazines to AIDS service organizations and anyone who is positive and can't afford a sub? If *POZ* refused to sell ads to pharmaceuticals, who would want to advertise in an HIV magazine -- and be able to pay for it? *POZ* does not make much money from sales of the magazine!

In reference to the photos: When I first tested positive, my doctor told me I had four years to live. Until then, I had led a pampered life -- my idea of roughing it was being stuck on Fire Island without a Cuisinart. But once I was diagnosed, I realized I'd better get busy. I became what drives those who complain about the *POZ* ads craziest: a mountain climber. I climb and hike with a backpack stuffed with baggies full of HAART meds. I feel that many of the drugs are toxic, but ultimately they are keeping me alive and active. Some of us -- even ordinary-looking, middle-aged guys -- swallow handfuls of drugs every day and still manage to climb mountains.

-- Larry Lash, New York City

Burning Bright

I just got my hands on a copy of the October 2000 *POZ*. The magazine brought up many beautiful and bitter memories of my own past and the road AIDS activism has taken.

I am a long-term HIV survivor (18 years now). The article about Stephen Gendin ("Bare Witness") stirred a spark of activismin me -- something I had abandoned in the midst of weariness and grief. By contrast, the article about ACT UP/San Francisco's idiotic stance that HIV doesn't cause AIDS ("The Boys in the Band") sickened me. I was in the first wave of AIDS in the Midwest in 1983 and the images of what AIDS did to people are as much a part of me as the drug regimens we activists

fought to get. We cannot afford to leave activism in the hands of ACT UP/SF and their imbecile ideologies.

As I was about to close the magazine, I saw on the back page a picture of the candlelight march in October 1988 in Washington, DC ("Old Flames"). I was there, and my light is still shining bright while others' have been extinguished. I owe it to all the flames that have gone out to keep on fighting no matter how tired I may be.

-- G. Rick Thies, Cincinnati

Clarifications: *David Hull, whose letter to* POZ *was published in the December 2000 Mailbox, is not HIV positive; he is an HIV-awareness instructor in a Texas prison.*

Lipo-lorn, take note: POZ *has received many requests for further information about lipodystrophy treatments, especially polylactic-acid injections. Look for a followup in June.*

Send letters, including name, address and daytime phone number, to: The Editor, *POZ*, Box 1279, Old Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10113; or e-mail us at: letters@poz.com. Printed letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret that we cannot answer all mail.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Mailbox-1153-2040