Mailbox

January 1, 2004 By Staff

Act Up

Thank you for the article "The Clock Watchers" [October 2003], about salvage therapy and the problems that arise when drug options run out. Both HIVers and neggies need to realize that the newer drugs don't work for everyone. For those doing well on HAART, this article should motivate you to get involved in the fight and not sit back and rest on your good lab values. More funding is needed for drug assistance programs and we need better expanded access programs. It only takes a few minutes to call or write your elected officials, so get off your asses and do it! Start by going to the AIDS Treatment Activists Coalition website (www.atac-usa.org) and educating youself.

--Brian Varner
Knoxville, Tennessee

Back to Iraq

The AIDS in Iraq article, "After Ibn Zuhur" [October 2003], is a deeply humane and important piece of journalism. Iraq now has a chance to stem the spread of the virus and better help those who already have it.

Sari, the 10-year-old HIVer featured in the article (and the subject of a documentary I am filming), was able to afford transportation and medicine thanks to several generous *POZ* readers' donations that I delivered to the Zegums. Currently, Sari has returned to his Baghdad farm after a summer stay in the air-conditioned Ibn Al-Khatib hospital. At home, Sari's medications are less accessible, but he's an uncommonly strong character, playing with his brothers in a way that I rarely saw during the spring.

--James Longley
Baghdad, Iraq

Tattoo Snafu

As a retired body-modification artist and the executive chair of a nonprofit organization that deals with HIV and hepatitis, I feel the need to respond to an inaccurate statement made by Robert W. Haley, MD ["Tat Caveat," October 2003]. Federal occupational safety regulations *do* exist, governing all personal service workers including those in the body-modification industry. Since the industry self-regulates for the most part, a person *should* ask their artist if they follow the federal guidelines with regular hand-washing, gloves, disposable ink caps and a spore-tested autoclave. Before our government interferes with the body-modification industry, it should look into the filthy

practices followed in hospitals.

--Jack Kaplan
Executive Chair, Planet Poz
Edgewood, New Mexico

Dr. Robert Haley responds: *I understand tattoo artists' desire to remain free of further regulations, but we must recognize that unregulated tattooing is a common route of hep C transmission. If infections occasionally occur in hospitals, where professionals are trained in protective precautions, one can only imagine how frequently they happen in tattoo parlors.*

Let's Talk About sex

The October 2003 Publisher's Letter painfully discloses what many serodiscordant couples deal with on a daily basis. Living with HIV is so fucked up on more levels than I care to think about, though if I *were* to think about it on a continuous basis, I would probably lose my mind. I applaud Brad Peebles for having the courage and wisdom to address this delicate subject in such a personal and moving manner.

--Charles E. Clifton, Executive Director
Test Positive Aware Network (TPAN)
Chicago

I read the October 2003 Publisher's Letter and felt that you were doing a disservice to the HIV community by stating "lower viral load means a lower risk of transmission." What was your source for this information? It can be misinterpreted to mean that one can have unprotected sex.

--Name Witheld
Via the Internet

Brad Peebles responds: *I'm sorry that you felt I was doing a disservice to the HIV community. My intentions were quite the opposite. Undetectable HIVers are not exempt from wearing condoms. However, their risk of transmitting HIV is significantly lower than that of other HIVers, based on a NIAID study found in the March 30, 2000* New England Journal of Medicine.

Hitting on Patients

The article "Hitt and Run" [June 2003], which documented Dr. Scott Hitt's alleged illegal and unethical sexual conduct with patients, fascinated me. Hitt has done many great things, but it is never acceptable for a doctor to have sex with his or her own patients. It is time for all gay health care professionals to put their patients' welfare above their own narcissistic needs.

--William Greenhouse, PhD,
Pompano Beach, Florida

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