Mailbox

October 1, 2003

LIFE'S A BEACH

Your story on Miami ["Wish You Were Here?," June 2003] will attract desperately needed attention to a local epidemic that has accelerated catastrophically. According to reporter Andrea Robinson, African-American, Latino, Caribbean-American and gay HIV advocates "retreat to their own enclaves" [to focus on providing services to their respective communities]. Given the paucity of financial resources, some competition among these groups is understandable. But if the diverse health advocates who attended amfAR's 15th National HIV/AIDS Update Conference are any indication, Miamians are ready and willing to unite and learn about new forms of prevention, care and treatment.

Daniel Gaetán-Beltrán, Director, Public and Professional Education
American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR)
New York City

CROSS-EXAMINING ROOM

Reading your article on ethically embattled Scott Hitt, MD ["Hitt and Run," June 2003], I couldn't help being offended. The assumption that sex between gay HIVers and their doctors is the norm is a homophobic stereotype. Ken Haller's statement about gay men coming "from a place of real loss" is completely out of touch with today's realities. The new breed of gay men, born in the era of AIDS, are self-confident, well-balanced and fully realized human beings. I compare this issue [of gay doctor-patient sex] to that of barebacking—yes, it happens, but no, it's not the norm.

C. L. Milan
St. Petersburg, Florida

Far from raising questions about doctor-patient bonds, your editor in chief, Walter Armstrong, spends four pages making excuses for outrageous, unprofessional behavior. The bias peaks when Armstrong publishes multiple accusations by Scott Hitt's lawyers ridiculing the sexual harassment charges leveled by former employee Michael Shelton, while blissfully sidestepping Shelton's case. Hitt may need to preserve the image of righteousness in order to win this case, but it is not necessary for Armstrong to defend an admitted medical-ethics violator from charges of employee harassment.

Jim Smith
West Hollywood, California

POZ responds: *We do our best to present fair, accurate information and all sides of a story. But in the specific case of Michael Shelton's accusations against Scott Hitt, neither Shelton nor his lawyers nor, for that matter, Hitt would comment, leaving us only documents and secondhand sources to quote—none of which "ridicule" Shelton's charges. As for Hitt's admitted medical-ethics violations, the purpose of the story was to understand, not judge, them.*

HANGING TO THE LEFT

If President Bush gave $50 billion to fight AIDS, I wonder if POZ would still ridicule him for not giving enough money or time ["Follow the Diva," June 2003]. You liberals are never happy. If President Clinton would give $5 billion, you would praise him like no tomorrow. Why don't you stop the Bush bashing? And, just a reminder: In the last election, Bush received 25 percent of the gay vote.

Name Withheld
Via the Internet

SEROSTATUS SYMBOL

Thank you for taking the time to do a follow-up interview with me [Snap Shots, June 2003]. I would like to make one clarification: The way I was quoted suggests that serostatus was never discussed in my relationship. This is not the case. My boyfriend knows my status and I know his. I simply respect his anonymity regarding his status, whatever it may be.

Brett VanBenschoten
Los Angeles

GRACES OF FACES

All those pretty people in your ads for weight gain products, facial reconstruction and new drugs—where are the people who really have the faces of HIV?! Your publication is truly a lifesaver, but for those of us living with HIV, the photos are anything but realistic. Not seeing people who you can identify with takes a little oomph out of your ads and stories.

James Foster
Indianapolis

HOWDY, PARTNER

Partner is my favorite section of POZ. It's an invaluable source of information—news, health tidbits and commentary—but boy do I miss Lark Lands' contributions.

Steve
Los Angeles

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