Mailbox

January 1, 2003 By Staff

It’s Supplemental, My Dear

Thank you for a very valuable story on HIV vitamins and supplements ["Tough Act to Swallow," October 2002]. It was thorough and very informative. But when I finished it, I was still confused. As the article said, this has been an ongoing debate for the past few years: What to take? How much? What really works? Please keep us updated on this topic. I’m hungrily awaiting new information.

-- Derek Worley
Test Positive Aware Network
Chicago

The article on vitamin supplements was needed by the HIV community. Maybe having this disease is a call to be more Spartan and aggressive in our lives, not just take it lying down and accept some slow form of death through multiple health problems. I believe all HIVers have a choice -- become a “health freak” or be ready to suffer the consequences. The natural way does work. My viral load fell from 35,000 to 7,000 in four months of sticking to natural supplements. This just doesn’t get the coverage that HAART does. We need to eat well, exercise and take supplements -- or be ready to swallow the lovely pills and their wonderful side effects.

-- Clive Alexander
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Rural Reality

Being a native Wyoming boy with AIDS, I read "Alone on the Range“ [October 2002] with interest. I was diagnosed in Baltimore, Maryland, and returned to my ”native country," Laramie, in 1998. I knew there would be challenges. These have ranged from a somewhat-closeted HIV positive community to case managers and pharmacists without a clue about my basic health needs. But I experienced the same things in Baltimore!

I’m one of the small minority who choose to get primary care from a local doctor. I have been on HAART for over six years, with a variety of medical concerns. These have all been handled in a professional, caring manner.

Wyoming has compassionate people; it also has people who would like for us not to exist. But guess what? This isn’t a “frontier” phenomenon, either. Do I wish HIVers in Wyoming would become more active? Absolutely! But these are the same wishes I had while living in a major HIV-impacted area for 12 years. Only now, I get to be home when I wish upon that star.

-- Robert L. Hooker
Laramie, Wyoming

I am sending you this letter because I am sick to death of how my children, my boyfriend and I are treated in this ass-backward county. I have been HIV positive for several years, and my boyfriend has AIDS. My children are picked on at school and even at church. My daughter's science teacher taught a lesson on AIDS that shot down everything I have told her, and now I hear her crying at night because she thinks I will drop dead at any minute. My husband was killed four years ago in an accident. Since then, fellow students have told my children that AIDS killed him. There might be some truth to that, since he was denied help by the police officer because he thought my husband had AIDS -- and so he bled to death!

I have offered to go to our local schools and educate these children and teachers about HIV, but I am always told it would be better if I don't. What hurts most is the tears in my children's eyes because adults can't educate themselves or their children.

-- Angela M. Aldridge
Wagram, North Carolina

Don't Ask

I am writing in response to a letter to the editor regarding "Sex Crimes" [July/August 2002] and those who don't tell sex partners they have HIV. I could not believe that Randy Rowland admitted to starting a campaign against two people he knew to be HIV positive and having bareback sex. Who the hell does he think he is? It's deplorable for some self-appointed "safe-sex crusader" to tell on people he assumes aren't disclosing their status.

I don't even tell my status anymore. Asking someone their status is bullshit anyway. They will either lie, omit or honestly do not know. It makes much more sense to just assume everyone is positive, and play safe. I hope Mr. Rowland will rethink his vengeful strategy.

-- Justin Pruitt
Dallas

I am not HIV positive, but I work in HIV prevention. Confidentiality laws apply to information obtained through a provider/client relationship. As an individual, the rules change. If I learned, not through work, but through my friends or the club scene, that someone knew he was HIV positive and was not telling his partners, I would confront him with this troubling gossip. If it turned out to be true, I would out him to the unsuspecting person. People have no right to privacy if their behavior is irresponsible and deadly! But we all are responsible for our health, so use a condom every time.

-- Giovani Rodriguez
Portland, Oregon

Mythical Meth

“Life vs. Meth” [July/August 2002] bothered me greatly. All these men talk about how sex is what drives them to use meth. Has anyone discussed the fact that sexual addiction is a clinically diagnosable condition and causes severe behavioral problems? Sex (and sharing needles) -- not meth -- transmits HIV. Meth addiction is a poor excuse for indulging in risky behavior and not addressing sexual issues. Shame on *POZ* for glorifying a disgusting drug scene and perpetuating the myth that meth makes sex better.

-- John Getz
Loon Lake, Washington

Kevin Koffler did a brilliant job of sending my senses on yet another trip down memory lane. It has been 17 years since I was a meth junkie, but not an hour passes without my mind drifting back to those exceptional years of sex on meth. I’d like to stop the euphoric recall, the imaginary rushes, and enjoy my present good health while it lasts.

It’s tough, though, partly because, as Koffler pointed out, there’s no comparison between memories of crystal intimacy and anything in real life. Consequently, I haven’t enjoyed sexual intimacy since letting go of crystal. Add that to 20 years of fighting HIV and I’m back where I started, wanting to score and spend the weekend at the baths in San Francisco. Thank you for putting into words my passion, my youth and my dance with Tina.

-- Name Withheld
Santa Fe, New Mexico

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