Mailbox

May 1, 2005

Tea Cell

“The English Patients” [January 2005] valiantly touches on the complexity of the HIV crisis in what you call drugged-out, desperate Britain. I want to add that Britain’s politically correct climate prevents us from addressing all of our preventions concerns. You’ve only got to look at the increasing new diagnoses to realize that the campaigns targeted at HIV negative individuals are not working. And surely, the problem isn’t just poor funding, but also the failures of current spending. So, we ask, should we shift the focus of prevention from negatives to positives? Then we must deal with stigma, since without stigma, PWAs might feel more comfortable disclosing our status before sex. We might even negotiate safer sex, perhaps even reducing the transmission rate to zero.

Stephen Bitti

Chief Executive, UK Coalition of People Living With HIV AND AIDS

London

Courtside

Pharmagiant Abbott’s 400 percent Norvir price hike was not only the top AIDS story of 2004, as recognized in your magazine, but the top prescription-drug story, period [“A Bitter Pill,” January 2005]. This naked grab for market shares symbolizes everything that’s wrong with the pharmaceutical industry. Abbott has refused to budge, even in the face of unprecedented advocate and medical pressure, but the courts can still challenge and confront it. The Prescription Access Litigation Project is involved in a California class-action suit against Abbott on behalf of health-care insurers and union funds—which bear most of the hike’s costs. Recently, the court denied Abbott’s motion to dismiss,allowing our case to proceed. When drug companies hold patients hostage to their greed, we are all threatened, but consumers are continuing to fight the outrageous tactics.

Renee Markus Hodin

Associate Director, Prescription Access Litigation Project

Boston

The Marriage Bug

Sean Strub’s “Founder’s Letter” about AIDS activism in a second Bush term [January 2005] told me

that same-sex marriage activists are not alone in our dismay with those relinquished the fight for political justice nonprofit executive directors and other political leaders. Some of these leaders have called for moderating goals in the marriage-rights fight—this is our own worst political nightmare, not the Republicans. I for one will somehow muster great energy to fight discrimination and live a life of integrity. I trust that due to Strub's inspiring words on reclaiming power, HIVers will, too.

Jesus Lebron

New York City

Pointing North

Is my New Year's resolution related to my health or HIV? [POZ.com Poll, January 2005]. Yes! I resolved to do everything I can to ensure that the HIV-related health care and services I have here in Canada are improved, not further eroded. We are blessed with universal health care, but we aren't perfect. The ugly realities include the plight of first-nations people, homeless people and drug abusers. And at the Infectious Disease Clinic at Vancouver's St. Paul's Hospital we have lost our director, our sole psychiatrist and many of our beds. Yet fellow HIVers remain oblivious to the fact that the house they feel so secure in is teetering on a precipice, ready to tumble over the edge with the next fiscal sneer of the government.

Michael Connidis

Vancouver

Dive Deeper

I find it hard to identify with Greg Louganis and his bouts with depression ["Coming Up for Air," January 2005]. He has worldwide fame, Olympic gold medals, book deals, million-dollar commercial endorsements and a biographical TV movie. I doubt he has ever had to spend hours in a Social Security office awaiting disability benefits or to declare personal bankruptcy, live in subsidized, substandard housing or wait endlessly in filthy, poor staffed public health clinics for bare-minimum health care. If you want to put a true face on depression and HIV, speak to the cash-strapped thousands who must worry about their next meal and dealing with ASOs experiencing government-funding cuts.

Anonymous

Philadelphia

Correction: "Legal Eye" (Feb/March 2005) advised readers to try "try the yellow pages" to find a lawyer. It should have read "try your local legal services office or ASO or a national legal agency such as Lambda Legal or the ACLU."

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