Mailbox

December 1, 2003 By Staff

DOCTOR FEELBAD

Your Q&A session with four doctors is an eye-opener ["The Great Doctor/Patient Face-Off," September 2003]. The only doctor who appears truly compassionate and dedicated is Judith Feinberg. Her answers are nonjudgmental, while the others' show little patience for or understanding of unique differences. Docs have become so clinical that they often forget they are dealing with human beings. Just because someone is asymptomatic, for example, does not mean he is not having problems dealing with his diagnosis.

--Carlos Milan
St. Petersburg, Florida

I find Dr. Delia Bullock's "Face-Off" remarks insulting. Implying that the majority of PWAs are out to rip off the system is ignorant. Dr. Bullock's preference for a patient "in control of his or her life" smacks of the antiquated idea that any psychological effects of long-term HIV survival are something for which the patient must be blamed. I say, run from an HIV doctor who claims to listen and then makes snide comments about her patients.

--Joseph Bridwell
Seattle

I am shocked by Dr. Delia Bullock's responses, especially where she notes that her ideal patient "works for a living and is in control of his or her life." I find Dr. Bullock very knowledgeable, as she is my HIV specialist. I am unable to work, however, due to AIDS-related disability. Her nightmare patients—those who fight for disability despite being asymptomatic and having good numbers—have struggled long and hard for their disability rights, not because of HIV but because of depression and other side effects.

--Name Withheld
San Antonio, Texas

WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

In Hilary Beard's "Standing in the Shadows of Love" [September 2003], a blasé African-American woman named Tonya recounts how her ex hopped from bed to bed, making babies and passing along HIV. Beard blames this behavior not on Tonya or her former man, but on "white America." Please.

Why did I get HIV? Because I was horny and wanted dick—immediately. Incidentally, the man who gave me HIV is black. Perhaps I was atoning for white America's collective sins by taking a black man's bug up my ass. But I think I was just horny. Let's not bullshit ourselves—we can practice safe sex, abstain, or have unsafe sex and take our chances.

--Robert
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Hilary Beard responds: *I also stated that "we African Americans have been miseducated, or are so depleted and rundown that we can't or don't care for ourselves." Read: We are also responsible. But more precisely, institutional racism fuels the disproportionate spread of HIV in communities of color.*

WE GIVE CHANGE

I'm grateful for Dr. David Gelman's article on changing meds ["Hitting the Switch," September 2003]. Dr. Gelman reminded me that I need to take the lead, armed with hope, solid data and flexibility, in accepting varying opinions. I've found Project Inform's Personal Tracking Charts (projectinform.org/pdf/tracking.pdf) incredibly simple yet helpful for tracking my treatment history—CD4 counts, viral load and medicine records.

--Greg Hunicutt
Seattle

GOING DUTCH

I am a doctor in Amsterdam, and my colleague and I have been treating several hundred patients with the anti-lipodystrophy drug Bio-Alcamid with great results ["Take This Mug and Stuff It," May 2003]. Bio-Alcamid is an Italian product that has passed all necessary European tests. In experienced hands, one treatment often is enough. We have also used New-Fill, but since Bio-Alcamid goes under the skin, where the problem resides, we now use Bio-Alcamid exclusively.

--Leo van Rozelaar
Amsterdam

CORRECTION

In response to an anonymous letter- writer's silly criticism of Larry Kramer, including his alleged appearance on the cover of Newsweek [Mailbox, September 2003], you wrote: "And for the record, no AIDS activist has ever made a Newsweek cover." Wrong. The late Bobbi Campbell, an openly gay, HIV positive, San Francisco activist, was on the cover of Newsweek with his lover in 1983.

--Cleve Jones
Palm Springs, California

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