Mailbox

June 1, 2002 By Staff

Ms. Lonelyhearts

As I read "A Loving Spoonful" [February/March 2002], I wonder where that love is? I have been alone for eight years now. AIDS is different in the rural towns. The cows don't answer (I tried). I've buried all my friends and my husband. I can't believe there are no hetero men around. I pray that I'll meet one before there's no one home to answer the door. I did start a support group, which would have been unheard of a couple years ago. I learn a lot from your magazine and am thankful for a glimmer of hope that I won't die alone.

-- Cyndi Cole
Baraboo, Wisconsin

ADAP Flap

As Michigan Drug Assistance Program coordinator for five years and an individual long committed to fighting the HIV epidemic, I am alarmed and dismayed at a potentially damaging inaccuracy in "Drug Bust" [February/March 2002]. Not only has Michigan never restricted access to antiretrovirals, we monitor potential FDA approvals so we can modify our formulary to include new HIV drugs prior to their entering the market, therefore avoiding delays in our clients' access. As of April 1, we're adding a total of 66 new drugs to the Michigan DAP formulary, bringing the total number to 156, including all FDA-approved antiretrovirals. Only New York, Missouri, Oregon and Wyoming offer more.

-- Merry Donn Gastambide
Michigan DAP/DDP Coordinator
Via the Internet

***POZ* responds:** *We apologize to Ms. Gastambide and the Michigan DAP employees for mistakenly reporting that it offers "a reduced selection of antiretrovirals as a way of holding down costs -- leaving drug-resistant HIVers out in the cold." As Ms. Gastambide explains, Michigan's DAP has neither implemented nor considered a reduced selection of antiretrovirals. It is the Michigan Medicaid policy that has changed -- it now requires prior authorization for specific meds, including some that may be used by HIVers, but not antiretrovirals.*

While I agree that many states' ADAP programs are facing severe financial shortfalls, your article made no mention of the ADAP program in New Jersey, which continues to thrive. In January 2002, New Jersey expanded its ADAP formulary to include any FDA-approved medication. An investigation of how New Jersey has accomplished this might be helpful for people with HIV across

the nation.

-- Joseph T. Sirak
Mercer County HIV Consortium
Mercer County, New Jersey

Seven HIV positive people have spearheaded an effort to get the state of Maine to implement the federally approved HIV Medicaid waiver [making Medicaid available to HIVers who are not disabled or whose incomes are not low enough to qualify]. We talked to legislators, wrote letters, started a postcard campaign, contacted the governor, rallied and picketed. Now the funding for the February 2000 waiver is in the July 1 budget. It is amazing what seven people can do -- helping others who are ill and making sure those who have fallen before us are always remembered!

-- Linda Hazelton, Jean Lavigne, Karlene Dorey,
Terrance Mansur, Dana McKneen
The Client Service Committee of Eastern Maine AIDS Network
Bangor, Maine

Boys R Us

I found "A Boy's Own Story" [February/March 2002] very interesting. Must be something for Mr. Hitzel to be going through that at 20, when I feel the same way at 32 and have been positive for six and a half years. The final paragraph really summed it up. It's a sad subject, but nice to be able to relate so closely.

-- D. Bennett
St. Petersburg, Florida

Trial and Error

I liked the "Publisher's Letter" [February/March 2002]. As a PWA for 13 years -- having been through almost all of the 16 approved drugs and many drugs in trial, without a choice of when to start meds or whether to try STIs -- I found that I could do more. I joined a Community Advisory Board. We look at protocols before they are approved for study and offer input on whether they will actually benefit us. Go to the AIDS Clinical Trials Information Services website (www.actis.org), find out which trials are in your area and get involved.

-- C. Mark Reed
Covington, Kentucky

I work in HIV research on Long Island, for Dr. Linda Chang, whose protocols examine how HIV, ecstasy and methamphetamine affect the brain. Our studies are purely for research, funded by the NIH and not attached to the commercial drug-development process. Nonetheless, the profit-driven corporate entities have created cynicism, as Publisher Brad Peebles so accurately states, and this has affected us all. I agree with him, and hope that we can all return to a spirit of altruism.

-- Lisa V. Zimmerman
Via the Internet

Spin Cycle

The Los Angeles Superior Court ruled in favor of AIDS/ LifeCycle, the fundraising cycling event coproduced by the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, rejecting the lawsuit by Pallotta TeamWorks to stop the event ["Bike Drama," February/March 2002].

Our decision to end our relationship with Pallotta TeamWorks was not made lightly. California AIDSRide 8 had large, unapproved cost-overruns, intense marketing of Pallotta TeamWorks and put AIDS on the back burner. Fundraising costs increased over two years from less than 35 cents on each dollar raised to nearly 50 cents -- a loss of nearly $1 million in the past year. Pallotta TeamWorks was unwilling to accept reasonable cost-control provisions.

AIDS/LifeCycle is a fully supported event with hot showers, healthy meals, tents and, yes, participation in a community of caring people cycling together for a week down the beautiful state of California -- all on behalf of an end to AIDS.

-- Gustavo Suárez
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
San Francisco

Organ Solo

I'm writing to thank you and mention how much *POZ* has been a part of my treatment. As an 18-year survivor in end-stage hepatitis C, I was especially glad to see your mention of the five coinfected (with hepatitis B, C or both) HIVers who had liver transplants and are doing fine after two years ["Buzz Back From ICAAC," February/March 2002].

-- D.
New England

Send letters, including name, address and daytime phone number, to: The Editor, POZ, *One Little West 12th St., 6th Flr., New York, NY 10014; or e-mail us at: letters@poz.com. Printed letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret that we cannot answer all mail.*

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