Standard Issue

One in four PWAs mistreated by docs

October 1, 1998 By Scott Hess

It’s hard to keep up in the fast-paced biz of HIV meds. So says the first National HIV/AIDS Treatment Survey of docs, which revealed that one quarter of all PWAs gets substandard care. Shifting guidelines, complex dosing, high drug prices, inexperience and differences in treatment philosophy may account for why a portion of the survey’s 476 MDs don’t stick to the federal guidelines for HIV treatment. The 25 percent who might be getting the shaft? Surprise! Mostly women and minorities, who tend to start treatment later than is recommended and are on fewer drugs than the three-plus required. “This disparity signals an urgent need to educate physicians and patients better and supports recent plans to create an HIV professional society,” said the study’s Dr. Paul Volberding, of San Francisco General Hospital. “This is not the type of medicine where you can relax with two-year-old information.” But TAG’s Spencer Cox was surprised that so many docs can stay current. HIV guidelines are reviewed monthly, he said, and can change pronto with a committee conference-call vote.

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