Strubco and the Home Test

POZ publisher plays role in development of home test kit

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POZ is published by Strubco, Inc., a direct marketing consulting and publishing firm based in New York City which specializes in the AIDS, gay and lesbian communities. Strubco's clients over the years have included virtually every major AIDS organization in the country and scores of corporations. Direct Access Diagnostics, the Johnson & Johnson company developing a home access HIV test, has been a Strubco client since October 1993. Strubco has conducted focus groups, interviews and survey research for Direct Access.

Sean Strub, president of Strubco, says he got involved with Direct Access Diagnostics "because people are dying from not knowing they are at risk. If this were a treatment for PCP, we would be in the streets demanding its release. In my view, it is equally as important to get people tested and protected against PCP *before* they get sick."

Strub's firm has helped facilitate community involvement in the development of the test. "We have suggested improvements and modifications in many aspects of the test, including its counseling component, labeling and marketing strategies. Part of our corporate mission is to get major corporations to include community involvement in their development of new products and services."

"In my view, present testing venues are not as anonymous as home testing. Many people are not anonymous even when going to a so-called anonymous testing site, particularly those in small towns."

Strub anticipates criticism of his endorsement of the Direct Access Diagnostic test. "All I can offer is disclosure when there is a conflict, as there is here. If my company can help bring a new product or treatment out that we believe will save lives, I'll take the heat. And if people believe our editorial coverage is biased, we'll print their letters of criticism.

"The bottom line is that we're helping to save lives," Strub says. "I have no doubt that every person in an emergency room with PCP who did not know previously they were HIV positive would strongly support an inexpensive, widely accessible, accurate home HIV test. Had it been available, they might not be ill today."

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