I Won’t Back Down

Living with cancer and HIV is the theme of this issue.

July 1, 2019 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I tested HIV positive in 1992. I was 22 years old. I’ll never forget how devastated I was upon hearing the news. That was four years before effective treatment of the virus, so I believed that my fate was to die before age 30.

Testing HIV positive today is a much different experience. The expectation of living a virtually normal life span is a reality for those who are newly diagnosed and have access to care and treatment. Planning for your future doesn’t have to be put on hold.

Increasingly, the same can be said for people who receive a cancer diagnosis. The initial devastation of being told you have cancer is more often being replaced by the hope that new cancer treatments provide. Although cancer can be a potentially fatal disease, living with cancer is possible.

Our cover guy, Sean McKenna, knows this to be true. As a long-term survivor of HIV, he has faced many battles, including skin cancer and anal precancer. Jill Cadman has battled colon cancer. Click here to read about living with cancer and HIV.

As people living with HIV grow older, they’re also facing cancer. Some of those cancers are related to having HIV, but many are not. As a result, understanding cancer is vital for those of us who have the virus.

Thankfully, there is a federal agency that coordinates research on the intersection of cancer and HIV. Click here to read about the Office of HIV and AIDS Malignancy at the National Cancer Institute.

The arrival of new cancer treatments is rewriting the story of cancer survival. The same goes for living with HIV—as treatment for the virus has progressed, so has the improvement in quality of life.

POZ has witnessed this process for the past 25 years. Since our first issue in 1994, we have chronicled the ups and downs of HIV research. From serious side effects to the ease of single-tablet regimens, POZ has reported all the details for our readers.

To continue commemorating our 25th anniversary, POZ will publish a retrospective book later this year. Titled POZ at 25: Empowering the HIV Community Since 1994, the book will be a smorgasbord. About half of the book will recap coverage of the contents of each issue.

In addition, readers will find four original chapters. Each of these chapters will tell a similar narrative, but through a different lens. They are: research, celebrities, contributors and personal stories. We will print each of these book chapters in the magazine for you to preview.

In this issue, we're publishing a chapter written by POZ editor-at-large Ben Ryan that takes a look at 25 years of HIV research. Click here to read the excerpt.

For all the progress that has been made in the fight against HIV, nothing has yet come along to prevent the inevitable. Effective treatment may save us from the virus, but we are all still human. So we say goodbye to Andy Vélez, a dear friend of POZ. Click here for more.

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