Brand New Day

Although the coronavirus pandemic is far from over, the U.S. outlook is truly improving.

June 28, 2021 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I am finding it difficult to adjust to the new reality we are all living through—COVID-19 rates are quickly decreasing in the United States. Although the coronavirus pandemic is far from over, the U.S. outlook is truly improving.

That's not just my wishful thinking. The statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other such sources continue to show that new coronavirus cases are way down, as are hospitalizations and deaths. Mask and social distancing mandates are rapidly disappearing.

And yet a nagging feeling persists in my gut. Perhaps yours too. As an over-50 person living with HIV and other health conditions, I am cautiously optimistic about COVID-19. I want to believe, but my experience with HIV has often made me think twice about getting ahead of the science emotionally.

To that end, our cover story in this special treatment issue addresses questions about COVID-19 many of us living with HIV still have, including its impact on our lives. Specifically, we dive deep into how COVID-19 has affected HIV services. Click here to read how HIV care is getting back on track.

An interesting aspect of the fight against COVID-19 is just how crucial HIV advocates have been in the response. Indeed, comparisons between AIDS and COVID-19 have been made since the beginning of the new pandemic. Click here to read more about the parallels and the lessons learned.

A big part of getting HIV care back on track after COVID-19 is refocusing on the many unanswered questions remaining when it comes to fighting the retrovirus. Case in point: Can HIV treatment prevent all transmission of the virus?

A decade after learning that antiretrovirals (ARVs) prevent sexual transmission of HIV—a concept now known as Undetectable Equals Untransmittable (U=U)—researchers are addressing whether ARVs can prevent transmission via breastfeeding and injection drug use. Click here for more.

As mentioned in this issue's U=U feature story, July 2021 marks 10 years since the idea was first announced at an HIV research conference. This year also marks five years since the launch of the

U=U movement by the Prevention Access Campaign. Seems like only yesterday, but also like a lifetime ago.

The COVID-19 pandemic had the same time-warping effect the HIV/AIDS pandemic had before it. It's mind-boggling that June 5, 2021, marked 40 years that the retrovirus has been a part of our collective consciousness. So much has happened in these four decades, which means a lot is at risk of being forgotten. Thankfully, we still have many HIV advocates among us ensuring that we remember.

Andrew Spieldenner is one of them. He is the new executive director of MPact Global Action for Gay Men's Health and Rights. Click here to read a Q&A with him. Dafina Ward is another. She is the new executive director of the Southern AIDS Coalition. Click here for more on her advocacy. And click here to read about JD Davids advocating for people living with long COVID.

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