Three Cheers for a Cure!

May 8, 2015 By Trent Straube

Hip Hip Hurray: An Institute for HIV Cure Research!
We love to hear the word cure, and few organizations talk about it with as much zeal as amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research. The goal of its "Countdown to a Cure for AIDS" initiative is to develop the scientific basis of a cure by 2020. Lucky for us, amfAR puts its money where its mouth is. Specifically, amfAR will invest $80 million in grants toward cure-based research while another $20 million grant will establish the amfAR Institute for HIV Cure Research, which will be located at a yet-to-be-announced academic research facility. If you build it, a cure will come.

Hip Hip Hurray: Human Trials for a Functional Cure!
In other cure news, the Food and Drug Administration has given the OK for human trials of a gene therapy that might lead to a functional cure (this is when HIV is not eradicated from the body, but people are able to control the virus without daily meds). The new investigational therapy involves genetically altering an HIV-positive person's stem cells so they'll be resistant to the virus. If this Phase I trial proves the therapy is safe, then it must pass two additional phases of trials.

Hip Hip Hurray: A Cure Rally Cry From an AIDS Icon!
When Larry Kramer—who co-founded GMHC and ACT UP and wrote *The Normal Heart*—accepted the first Larry Kramer Activism Award from GMHC, he gave what folks dubbed "The Cure Speech."

"I no longer hear the word 'cure' from the remnants of ACT UP…or from anyone in our health care establishment," Kramer said. "Thus what an irony to be asked back into the arms of GMHC, just when a new executive director, Kelsey Louie, who feels and says much the same as I did and do, has taken over.

"Kelsey said the words that won over my acceptance: 'We must aspire to a cure once and for all. Let's demand a cure and a society that values people with HIV enough to pay for it. Only if we aspire to more can we demand more. Only if we demand more will we get more.'

"My first child sounds like a chip off the old block. I salute him and all of you for being here to join me in supporting Kelsey and his and our new GMHC. The power to change history is still within our grasp. We cannot wait another 34 years. This evil still being waged against us must cease. The battle cry now must be one word: CURE. CURE. CURE."

For more on GMHC, click here for our POZ Q&A with Louie.

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