Letters—April/May 2015

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The Great Debate on Criminalization
Is criminalizing HIV ever a good idea? That's the question Benjamin Ryan posed in the POZ magazine feature "Burden of Proof" (January/February 2015). Turns out, battles over who's responsible for what, in terms of HIV transmission, are still waging.

I was lied to when I asked another man specifically if he "had anything to declare." I tested positive soon after. I had never had unsafe sex before. He just didn't want to use a condom. To me, that seems like criminal behavior. It didn't have to be HIV; it could have been any sexually transmitted infection (STI): It's assault if the other person knows it and lies about it. The laws should cover all STIs.

Jerry, San Diego

I remember fighting against forced testing in the late '80s in Washington. My argument was and still is: personal responsibility. If you don't want HIV, wear protection or abstain. You cannot blame anyone but yourself if you get it.

Scott Ricci

No law is black-and-white. There also needs to be proof of intent. If someone intentionally targets vulnerable people with the malicious intent of infecting them, I'd like to be the first to have five minutes alone in a room with that person. Yes, we are all responsible for protecting ourselves, but the whole reason there is still HIV outreach and education is because of ignorance and misinformation. I'm appalled that people with HIV are being incarcerated not because they infected someone they had sex with, but simply because they didn't inform them. We are demonized.

Vincent Blaine

#RyanWhiteWorks
The POZ.com Newsfeed highlighted this new campaign by the HIV Prevention Justice Alliance. "Real Stories of How the Ryan White Program Helps Folks With HIV" (January 26, 2015) lets some

of the program's beneficiaries tell you in their own words.

Ryan White helped me too. I have been dealing with HIV since my diagnosis in August 1990. I developed severe dental issues, and the program helped me get everything taken care of. I lost my husband and almost all of my friends. That little boy has saved so many lives, including mine. Please, please support the Ryan White Care Act.

Patrick Armstrong, Dallas

It lets me afford my medication so I can keep the virus suppressed and stop transmission.

Daniel Angelis

I was a Ryan White Title II pediatric case manager. The pediatrician I worked for believed that if you can't put food on the table, pay rent, afford transportation, etc., then medical services will go to the back burner. Without Ryan White funding, we wouldn't have been able to procure basic needs, which in turn enabled us to actively pursue medical services for HIV-positive children and babies.

Xiomara Sel-Cab

Out To Dry
Just weeks before he died of AIDS-related illness in 1985, film icon Rock Hudson asked the White House to help him cut through red tape to see a doctor in France. POZ.com's Newsfeed post "Why Nancy Reagan Refused a Dying Rock Hudson's Plea" (February 4, 2015) went over Buzzfeed's report that unearthed the tragic story.

It's always time for Nancy to apologize to the HIV and gay communities, for ignoring thousands of people dying from a disease that she and her husband wanted nothing to do with.

Eric Brun-Sanglard

What can you expect from people like that? Reagan did not even say the words "HIV/AIDS" until the end of his second term. By the time he did, the U.S. had 41,027 known deaths and another 71,176 known HIV/AIDS cases. No thanks to the Reagans, but I am still here after all of these years.

Ted

This would be another example of Reagan’s failures to be compassionate and intelligent. He also “released” thousands of mentally ill persons to the streets when he backed the closing of huge numbers of mental health facilities. All that man ever “trickled down” was suffering for so many innocent people!

Virpilosus

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