Letters—September 2016

August 15, 2016

PrEP Talk

In the article "Positive on PrEP" (June 2016), writer Trenton Straube interviewed three guys who got HIV after starting Truvada as pre-exposure prophylaxis.

Finally! A laundry list of do's and don'ts that state the obvious: No drug is a guarantee that one will not contract HIV. Condoms are still the cheapest and most effective way of reducing the risk of infection. The young man featured in the article who "works in the HIV field" yet contracted the virus demonstrates that we are all human. No matter what our knowledge level (or what should be our knowledge level) about HIV, we are still prone to error. HIV is an error that must be lived with.

Dale Smith

Nothing will or can ever be 100 percent. If that causes you anxiety, congrats for being a thinking, living human. As someone who seroconverted while 100 percent adherent to condoms 15 years ago, I remain quite confident I'd still be HIV negative if PrEP had been available then. All available evidence bears out that PrEP is extremely effective at preventing HIV. Alas, the rare outliers who seroconvert have to face peanut-gallery cynics, including [those] hating on PrEP and/or raw sex.

Jeton Ademaj

Thank you for the informative, well-balanced article. One suggestion I have is that you expand the section that describes the side effects that PreP (Truvada) users may experience to include altered kidney function and potential decrease of bone density in the long term.

SomeRandomGuy

If a doctor believes that their patient seroconverted on PrEP, it is ethically incumbent on them to report such suspected adverse events to the FDA and the manufacturer. Doing so allows for blood collection and data gathering that can help determine how this happened. This story does not tell us if those steps were taken in the first two cases in order to verify authenticity and advance understanding.

DamonLJacobs

Tired Out

In the Ask POZ post "I'm too exhausted to keep up with my friends and I'm afraid they will figure out I have HIV. What can I do?" (March 15, 2016), wellness expert Valerie Wojciechowicz provided tips on how to tackle fatigue.

Consider sharing your status with your closest friends. The energy required to hide it can be draining. Good friends will be supportive and help you in good times and bad. Keeping secrets separates you from people. HIV is a virus, not something shameful.

Positively Thriving

I gotta say, I'm kind of sick of how often I hear medical folk downplay the reason for the fatigue. It's the HIV meds. I'm not saying that they aren't great for reducing viral load—trust me—but after nearly a decade on meds and speaking to others, I have zero questions about it: It's the meds.

Cyd Tyger Connor

Very often, patients state that being medicated reduces the fatigue they had before meds, especially those who had high viral loads. After nearly 25 years of taking meds, I blame the fatigue on the chronic inflammation caused by HIV itself. We have reservoirs of viremia [virus in the blood] even when undetectable, so it's not surprising that we still have fatigue just from being HIV positive.

Michael Bivens

The Graduate

In his blog post "Graduating Again" (June 1, 2016), Aundaray Guess wrote about how getting his master's degree helped him graduate to a healthier life with HIV.

Well done! Education is not a black or white thing, as you know. It's a person thing. And just think on this—your education is fresh and new. It's not 30 years old and forgotten. Best wishes to you.

RicharD

Congratulations! I also graduated this year with a master's degree in health care administration with a concentration in education. Many African-American gay and bisexual men experience extreme isolation, and it can result in the internalized depression of their sexual identity. As a long-term survivor, I also wanted to set an example. Through hard work, dedication and tenacity, any real desire can be achieved.

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