How Many Candles?

It may matter if you're black or white.

October 1, 2008 By Laura Whitehorn

We've known for years that positive people on HIV meds are living longer, but exactly how many years can we expect? Two sets of study results released this past summer suggest that life expectancy may depend on whether you're black or white.

One international study projected that someone who begins taking HIV meds at age 20—and has a successful response—now has a life expectancy of age 69 (an HIV-negative person in an industrialized nation has an expected lifespan of 80). Of the more than 43,000 people in that study, those who started meds with CD4 counts above 200 lived 10 years longer than those who began with 100 CD4s. This confirms that starting HIV treatment sooner rather than later is vital to our longevity.

Another study reinforces the idea that lack of proper treatment can shorten life expectancy. According to that report, by the Black AIDS Institute (BAI), the death rate of HIV-positive African Americans is 2.5 times that of positive white Americans. Late diagnosis, lack of insurance, less access to health care and, in some areas, a scarcity of medical providers trained in HIV all contribute to this discrepancy.

All signs point to the need for all of us to demand top-notch HIV care for all positive people—no matter who, no matter what color.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/life-expectancy-black-white-HIV-15306-8190