



Stigmavir to Treat HIV Stigma?

The fictitious drug is part of an awareness campaign.

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HIV stigma in health care is real and harmful. Fortunately, health care providers can now take the antiviral drug Stigmavir to treat their stigma. Unfortunately, the drug is fictitious, but you can watch a real ad for it on YouTube.

Casey House, an AIDS service provider in Toronto, created the commercial as a public service announcement. It's the latest installment in the organization's long-running "Smash Stigma" campaign. At first serious and straightforward, the Stigmavir ad morphs into a musical set to a version of "I Will Survive" by Gloria Gaynor—the legendary diva herself even provided the rights to the song, according to a press release about the campaign. Here's a snippet of lyrics from the PSA:

"First I was afraid, I was petrified," sings a doctor mid-surgery. "I knew the science, but I was scared, I was shook inside. Then I took a pill and researched all night long, and I grew strong, and I learned how to carry on."

"I stigmatized, all the time," a dentist chimes in. "Looking back at my behavior, it should have been a crime."

"I should have trusted science, grounded in reality. Instead I broke the trust that my patient had in me," adds an anesthesiologist. "Now Stigmavir—it made things clear."

"I'm finally cured now: no more HIV fear."

Despite advancements in HIV treatment, stigma persists—including in health care settings. According to the Canadian AIDS service provider, one in five people living with HIV are denied health services because of stigma and discrimination.

“Stigma remains a significant barrier for individuals living with HIV seeking access to health care,” said Casey House CEO Joanne Simons in the press statement. “This year we’re inviting other health care providers to join us in the mission to create positive health care spaces that are informed, sensitive, inclusive and inquisitive rather than assumptive. Everyone deserves health care that meets their needs, treats them with respect and maintains confidentiality.”

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