I Want a New Drug

This treatment-themed special issue of POZ spotlights several issues that have evolved over the years.

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I often look to past issues of POZ when I'm planning future coverage. Many of the challenges we face today in fighting HIV have been around for a long time, which means POZ has probably covered any given subject.

What I'm mostly looking for is how the subjects have evolved over the years. If enough has changed, then perhaps it's time to revisit a topic. This treatment-themed special issue of POZ spotlights several issues that merited another look.

Ten years ago, Jeremiah Johnson was featured on our cover. When he tested HIV positive during his time as a volunteer in the Peace Corps, the organization dismissed him. He fought back, and, as a result, the Peace Corps changed its policies to accommodate volunteers living with HIV.

That experience led Jeremiah down the path of activism. He's currently the community engagement coordinator for Treatment Action Group. He's also a founding member of the direct action group Rise and Resist. And, it turns out, he's once again advocating for change at the Peace Corps.

Our current cover guy, Romany Tin, also was dismissed from his post as a Peace Corps volunteer after testing HIV positive. After an online search, Romany found media coverage of Jeremiah's Peace Corps ordeal, including our cover story. Consequently, Romany contacted Jeremiah for help, which Jeremiah was glad to offer.

Although it's true that the Peace Corps has many programs that benefit people living with HIV, when it comes to dealing with its volunteers, another storyline unfolds. Click here to read more about how Romany and others are fighting HIV discrimination in the Peace Corps.

Effective HIV treatment is a major reason why a decade ago the Peace Corps made accommodations for those living with the virus. The benefits of treatment have only increased since then. Case in point: "Undetectable = Untransmittable," or "U=U." When viral load is undetectable, there is effectively no risk of HIV transmission.

The U=U message is rooted in the idea of treatment as prevention, which has been around a long

time. However, the concept picked up steam in the last few years as more and more studies confirmed the message. Then, in 2016, the Prevention Access Campaign, headed by Bruce Richman, began advocating for U=U nationwide and around the world.

Early U=U supporters were crucial to the success of the campaign. Carl W. Dieffenbach, PhD, is one of them. He is the director of the Division of AIDS at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Click here to read about his thoughts on U=U and to get the latest updates on HIV research.

About 25 percent of Americans living with HIV also have hepatitis C virus (HCV). As a result, POZ has regularly reported on HCV through the years. The introduction of easier hep C cures in recent years has only increased reader interest for HCV coverage.

Now that people living with both HIV and HCV can get cured of the latter virus, we wanted to do a deep dive on all the related effects. Click here to read more.

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