Say It: Women Get AIDS*

Not all doctors have noticed that more and more U.S. women have HIV.

April 1, 2009

New Yorker Patricia Kelly, 54, didn't know that her husband of 25 years had HIV. The story didn't end when he died of lymphoma in 1998, Kelly says:

"I kept going to the doctor with infections—sinus infections, strep throat, coughs—plus fatigue and weight loss. But instead of doing an HIV test he treated me like a mental case.

"Then my daughter Rebecca became a life insurance agent and asked me to be her first client. After being screened, I received a certified letter in 2003 saying I couldn't be insured because I was HIV positive. I went from being a housewife and mother to being a widow with AIDS. And the stress of it all was helping HIV make me ill.

"The next year, I met [my boyfriend] Sean Ryan, a New York state prisoner. Knowing he's in solitary lockdown, in inhumane conditions, is stressful too. But now meds—along with counseling, openness and love—keep my virus in check."

*** Slogan on an ACT UP shirt from the early 1990s, when HIV was still seen as affecting only men**

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/women-get-AIDS-16281-1752