AIDS Treatment: How Soon is Now?

October 27, 2008 By Shawn Decker

A recent study suggests that the newly diagnosed will now be pressured to immediately start on HIV drugs. Here's the story, afternoon glory.

In the study, they found that people who started on HIV drugs with higher t-cell counts had a better survival rate. My worry is that I foresee doctors shoving pills at newly diagnosed people who have healthy immune systems.

I can't overstate the role that HIV drugs have played in my health since I started in 1999. I also can't overstate the importance of not starting on AZT in 1990 when it was suggested I do so- I wouldn't have adherred to the treatment in the early days of my diagnosis. Of course, I wouldn't recommend waiting until you have less than 100 t-cells, like I boneheadishly did, either.

A daily reminder of your status in the form of pills is something that you have to be ready for, mentally and emotionally. If the physical threat isn't there yet, I don't think a positoid should be asked to swallow more than they already have to, all things considered.

One other thing, the article mentions that drug holidays are a no-no. *" Another key study found that briefly interrupting treatment to give patients "drug holidays" puts them at grave risk." ...* How about some details: How long were the holidays? What were the patients numbers/health like when they took the holidays?

I blog my truth, without assuming that my truth would be the truth of anyone else living with HIV. I write occasionally about my week on/week off HIV meds schedule, which I've been doing successfully for six years now. I don't feel like I am at grave risk.

I know the medical community likes to paint people with medical conditions with big, broad strokes. My only suggestion is to let the patient determine which colors are used, and not to strap everyone down with the same well-intentioned advice.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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