An Introduction

August 19, 2009 By Joseph Sonnabend, MD

I'm Joseph Sonnabend and this is my first POZ blog post. To start, just a very few words about myself. I have been an infectious diseases physician and virologist, doing more doctoring than lab work since the start of the epidemic, but more lab work than doctoring before it began. But somehow I have managed to do both, and even a good amount of clinical research.

Until I was 45 years old my life had been spent entirely in the comfortable protection of academic medical centers. In 1978 I decided to work independently. At that time it seemed that the only way I could do this was in private practice providing care for sexually transmitted infections. I had worked part time in this field for the New York City Department of health, and as an infectious diseases specialist diagnosing and treating sexually transmitted infections, this was something I knew I could do well on my own, knowing where to get advice when needed.

So from being an Associate Professor of Medicine at Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, I became a private practitioner in New York City's Greenwich Village, specializing in sexually transmitted infections. I started my own office on 12th Street in New York City just in time to see the first manifestations of the AIDS epidemic among my gay male patients.

I thought that POZ readers might be interested in the earliest years of the epidemic. This is something I can write about as I participated in the earliest medical, scientific and community responses, at least in New York City, and have experiences in each of these areas.

There are fewer and fewer of us who were around during those early years and I hope I will be able to convey something of the feelings and thoughts experienced during that incredible time, as a doctor taking direct care of affected people, as a virologist, as a clinical researcher, and as someone active in community responses.

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