BP = Beyond Prevention

June 17, 2010 By Shawn Decker

So I've been writing a lot about the ban on blood donors with any hint of homosexual behavior over the last thirty years, as well as the reason why passions in the hemophilia community are so high. It's because we know something that is painfully obvious about the United States through our own history as it pertains to the HIV/AIDS crisis.

And that's that our country doesn't do prevention well.

Especially if it interferes with another word that begins with "pr": profits.

As a thinblooded (person with hemophilia) positoid (someone living with HIV) who is a sex educator, I am beyond aware of the fact that prevention takes a backseat in a society that has remedy pills for everything (just please ignore the side effects) and a misguided moralistic streak that ignores human nature and desire.... wait, where is this going?

To the Gulf.

I haven't blogged about the oil spill because I doubt anyone turns to me for their environmental disaster updates. It's not that I haven't been keeping up with it, or thinking about it. In all honesty, I've just been bummed out by the whole thing. Can you imagine being a preening, beautiful specimen of a bird one day and then being dumped on by sludgy, toxic shit the next?
Well, now a lot of our human allies have gone from being fisherman to scooping up that sludgy shit with shovels. And where I come in as a commentator on this latest in a long line of unnatural disasters is that this is quickly becoming not only an environmental crisis, but also an issue about preventable/unnecessary illnesses.

As the oil in the Gulf of Mexico wafts through the air like the magnificent fart of a lactose-intolerant Godzilla-esque sea creature, many who live in those coastal towns are starting to get sick with headaches and other symptoms that can't be explained away by any other cause. And what is BP doing to protect the people working there to clean up their mess?

Nothing.

Worse yet is that those who are showing up with gear that protects their respiratory systems are being told not to wear it- that doing so would result in the termination of that well-paying, cushy summer job. Might have something to do with p.r., as those masks might look scary on TV and, hell, they got away with banning those terribly upsetting images of those dying birds. It's easy to threaten someone who has just lost their job due to B.P.'s own negligence.

It’s disgusting.

There was Gulf War Syndrome in the early 1990’s, and I bet we’re going to be seeing the after effects of the Gulf Spill Syndrome for years to come. And like the blood crisis of the 1980’s, people are going to try to weasel their way out of culpability. Or look for clever ways to explain these egregious decisions away. Or just ignore all of these issues for as long as possible, knowing that they have legal cover so why even bother.

I just hate to see people in harm’s way. I know what it feels like to be less-than-100% healthy; it’s why I’ve dedicated my life to HIV prevention. There are people on the ground in all of the states affected by the spill doing their best to awaken BP to the health concerns of the clean up crews.

Let’s just hope their terrible record of prevention doesn’t dictate their course of action on this front as well.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

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