Head Trip

July 9, 2010 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

The night before driving up to Maine for an extended Fourth of July weekend with my boyfriend, he and I sat down to go over what remained to be done to prepare.

As we rattled off a mundane list of activities (pack hiking boots, prepare the cooler, don't forget the phone chargers), I transferred my HIV meds for the next few days from their large bottles to one small travel-size container.

Such is the life of someone living with HIV who is lucky enough to have access to care and treatment. Taking HIV meds (if you and your doctor together decide that you need them) every day, of every month, of every year until there's a cure.

Yes, I said it--a cure. I believe in a cure for HIV and I will never stop believing it will happen. It won't happen tomorrow, but it will happen. Anywho, I digress...

There are side effects to HIV meds and thankfully I've experienced very few of them. However, there's one side effect that everyone seems to ignore--the psychological toll.

From deciding to start HIV meds to overcoming any initial physical side effects to the every day struggles with adherence to the possibilities of future resistance and other unwanted unknowns related to long-term use of HIV meds, the head trip is huge.

So as I sat there nonchalantly transferring those HIV meds from their big containers to a little one in front of a person I love, I realized just how far I had come in my own journey of acceptance of my diagnosis. My HIV meds (and condoms) are tangible reminders of living with the virus, but I increasingly embrace them as aids in my fight against AIDS.

Now, if I could only stop worrying every night (dinner is over, take your HIV meds, I'll wait, damn I'm sleepy, oops, almost forgot) about not forgetting to take my HIV meds...

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