I’m Gonna Wipe That AIDS Right Off of My Face

January 24, 2013 By Mark S. King

For several years now, I’ve made the occasional pilgrimage to Vero Beach, Florida, to be treated by Dr. Gerald Pierone for facial wasting, or lipoatrophy. And for all of these years, we have battled The Look: the sunken cheeks and sagging face of someone who has been on HIV medications for a long time. In my latest video blog below, you’re going to see our progress, step by step.

It was all well and good to be front-and-center as an HIV-positive man during the first years of the AIDS crisis. It’s easier being a role model when your face looks good on the poster. But my dismay over the telltale wasting that began to appear on my face surprised me, and it pitted two strong emotions against one another: my pride in being a longtime HIV/AIDS survivor, and my shame for looking like one. I’m only human.

There is an emotional component to facial wasting, because it forces us to address our own vanity, as well as the very real, physical results of HIV medications, which often affect people who have had no other manifestations of the disease. I’ve tried to address these issues in past blogs, but to be honest, I have put more time and effort into just trying to wipe the AIDS right off of my face.

For my earlier treatments, Dr. Pierone used Sculptra and Radiesse, both effective but temporary solutions to facial wasting (results vary, but typically last somewhere between six months and two years).

Beginning with my last appointment a year ago (shown in a previous video blog), Dr. Pierone began using Artefill, a more permanent filler product (Dr. Pierone wisely does these treatments in careful stages). But, because Artefill is not FDA approved specifically for facial wasting (it is approved for cosmetic use), it cannot offer the same kind of patient assistance programs as the ones offered by Sculptra and Radiesse. New studies are underway now to show what we already know: Artefill is safe and effective for facial wasting. Once approved for this purpose, one can assume the manufacturer will join the patient assistance bandwagon.

Thanks for watching, and please be well.

Mark

(It’s worth mentioning that I do not receive promotional consideration from the makers of any of these products. I’m simply sharing my experience with facial wasting, and I’m sure that “results may vary,” as they say. -- Mark)

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