



Living in the Wreckage of My Future

January 16, 2009 By [Richard Ferri, PhD, ANP](#)

So here goes the deal. My name is Ric Ferri. I have a ton of degrees and honors for my work in HIV disease. I have written a lot for HIV journals and magazines and am thrilled be joining the POZ blogging team. I was elected president of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care back when the organization had a real heart and vision, and then went on to become president of the HIV/AIDS Nursing Certification Board which credentials nurses as experts in AIDS care. I have also been a loud mouth and pain in the ass to many people in the area of HIV primary health care because I practice HIV medicine, write about HIV medicine, and am living with AIDS. So there you have the basics.

I am a HIV positive AIDS medical provider and my view of the world is a little different than most of the talking heads I sit on ?expert? panels with around the world. There is a lot of other stuff to that will seep out over time like my addiction and recovery to booze, meth, and raunchy sex. The fact I was made a widower overnight due to my late husband coming into constant contact with second hand smoke. The absolute joy that I did not turn into the “widower man” in Provincetown, and met a wonderful man who I love very much. His name is Jim Lear and he is a great man, great partner, and great veterinarian. More to follow I am sure.

Anyway enough of this “me” stuff for now. If you really want to know anything all you have to do is ask. I either will tell you what you want to know or tell you have crossed the line. (Although I have never done drawn that line yet...maybe you can be the first?) Either way I will get back to you. You can also find out more about me and my antics at www.RichardFerri.com if you want.

But as I write my first blog for POZ my mind is slammed directly and deeply into the wreckage of my future. Addicts have a great way of living in fear of the future and making a mess of it. Why the hell do you think I drank and slammed meth for? Anything to escape today and avoid tomorrow. However, literally tomorrow is a milestone day for me. After 13 years on one HIV drug combo with only a few bumps in the road (okay more than a few but I am spilling the beans here again. Remind me to tell you about being sucker punched and nearly killed on 9/11 while my parents all suddenly decided to die within weeks of each other.)

Anyway tomorrow I am starting a brand new drug regimen for my HIV. I am thrilled and scared shitless at the same time. This is something AIDS health care providers just don't get. They stand around and talk to us about new drug combos and switching, stopping, and fuck knows what else like it no big deal is. Now in my head filled with science, medicine and HIV I am hearing the worst of the worst.

My old pills are like annoying friends that I never thought would desert me, but they have. (In fact I just swallowed the last of them with a cup of coffee - don't tell on me okay?) They were the demons I knew well. I could dance with those devils very nicely. However, my new pills still sit in their nice sanitary bag from the pharmacy. I think I am scared to let them out thinking that the HIV genie is going to appear, hit me in the head.

So here I am in the panic of what is yet to be. My meds (can we all say "life-long chemotherapy" out loud, and mean it?) are still covered in paper, and I glance at them like they may try to attack while I am not looking. Well, just they might. If you are taking HIV meds you know exactly what I am talking about. You just never know when they might turn on you and bite you in your T cells.

Living in the wreckage of my future is a nice comfortable place to hang out. I get to worry about what has not happened yet, build up enormous fantasies about the disaster that is certainly laying in wait, and prepare to start sitting my own Shiva. It is also comforting to worry and lets my mind wander back to why I bother to get sober. (Did I mention I was in jail for 3 days with a DUI before I even knew it? Of course with a blood alcohol level of THREE (yep, 3.0!) it still is a mystery as to why I woke up at all.)

But I am also excited in my own way. While I am enormously thankful for 13 very long years on the same meds - which is totally unheard of - I know it is time to change. My old pill buddies have finally decided to kick me in the ass with low T cells, paralyzing fatigue, and muscle wasting. Never mind the fun other symptoms such as crapping my brains out with some nice dry heaves thrown in. But what the hell. I am told it is no big deal. Like hell it isn't. It is a fucking big deal. I have jumped over both sides of the HIV pill bottle too many times. I not only prescribe these medications I take them. I may be many things but I am not a fool. Changing meds is hard. Forget what we in the lab coats tell you (by the way I don't own a lab coat) life on HIV meds can be hard. Changing is scary. Just because we have some really great drugs out there does not mean HIV is just another annoying disease to live the rest of your life with. I simply say bullshit to that.

So I will keep you posted on my new adventures. Please send comments and questions. My goal with my POZ blog is shake up some of the thinking you and your health care provider may have. Instill a little reality no matter what the consequences. I also firmly believe in treating the whole person and not just the virus. If you are a patient in my practice you and your health get my full attention. I work WITH patients. I demand that symptoms be managed. I also realize that HIV is not the only thing on people's health care plate, and I look at it all and not send patients off to have their prostate evaluated by someone else. Today, HIV medical care needs to be totally comprehensive and not parceled out. Not many providers are doing that. I hope that if they read my words for a while they might actually see the light.

Anyway, I am here for you and (yes) for me. The most important person in any exam room is the patient. Remember that. You are in charge. Those of us with prescription pads should be leaders and guides but not dictators. Patients do count. You count. I count.

Now off to sneak a peek at my new pill bottles and decide if I dare unleash them from their bag.

Ah, what the hell. My future is already a mess in my mind so let those fuckers out and let's see what happens.

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