Taking HIV Drugs As PrEP... Is This a Good Plan?

July 17, 2012 By Shawn Decker

The FDA has approved Truvada as a drug to be taken by people who are at risk for HIV infection. <A HREF="http://www.poz.com/articles/hiv_truvada_prep_761_22696.shtml">Read about it here</A>.

Now, for my opinion on the matter. I've been taking Truvada, along with two other anti-HIV medications, for quite a few years now. I'm not in favor of putting people who aren't positive on these drugs, because there are still so many people who are HIV positive who don't have access to the medications. The article linked above suggests the regimen be used with correct condom usage, and that partners of people who are HIV positive should be considered for taking Truvada as a preventative measure.

In my personal experiences with Gwenn, we've used condoms correctly for over ten years now. My medications have worked well in keeping my viral load down. I don't consider our relationship as high risk, or even low risk. We take her health and my health very seriously. Having said that, and knowing our success rate with condoms and the fact that even if a condom broke, my undetectable viral load would mean that it would be *highly* improbable (an understatement) that an infection would occur.

And since we take each others' health seriously, I would never put her on these drugs as a preventative measure. Of course, I am beyond thankful that I have my health. But there is a reason why I am on a week on/week off regimen with my HIV drugs. The side effects of these medications can be taxing. Even when I'm not feeling it, I'm aware that there could be long-term ramifications to the constant battle in my body between a virus and the medicine that is actively combating it. To think otherwise would be foolish.

So why would I advocate for putting my partner on these medications when condoms work just fine for us?

I know this measure isn't aimed solely at sero-diverse couples. Still, the only instance where I think the concept makes sense is for sex workers, but nobody is going to fund an initiative that helps sex workers stay safe by providing them with Truvada. A lot of times sex workers insist on condom use but have to relent if it means feeding themselves and their families. This would be a perfect way to minimize risk to the sex workers and the domino effect that happens when HIV infection occurs in these situations.

Positively Yours,
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