Thoughts at 102 Degrees

March 24, 2010 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Despite being HIV positive for nearly two decades, I've otherwise been in good physical health. Apart from the occasional cold or flu or sinus infection, that is. I'm actually still recovering from one of those thingamajiggies, which caught me off guard last week.

My doctor said it was a virus that was "going around" and since then I've unscientifically confirmed that said virus has indeed been a severe nuisance to many people in my six degrees of separation. I eventually took some sick days. At least I wasn't suffering alone.

The combined sinus pressure and chest congestion made my life quite unpleasant for too many days. For several nights I had high fevers reaching over 102 degrees Fahrenheit. Pills and rest. Time passed. Virus went away. If only HIV behaved the same way.

This unnamed virus is still lingering in a cough that diminishes ever so slowly (and is driving me, my coworkers and my boyfriend crazy). I will not be sorry when it finally departs. I've never liked uninvited guests, especially ones that don't know when it's time to leave.

As much as I hate being sick, it is a useful reminder every now and then of some essential truths about health. Being sick sucks. Anyone that tries to paint a happy face on that fact is slapping lipstick on a pig.

To deny people their pain is futile. To understand how that pain fuels their need to be well is wise. To help people get well and stay well is smart. To facilitate their wellness is humane. To obstruct their wellness is unjust.

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