

poslink



The Newsletter of
People Living with HIV/AIDS
Victoria Inc

Education, Information
& Representation

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Volunteer With Us @ Coventry House

**Are you interested in volunteering for a not
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**Would you like to be a part of an energetic
team that is dedicated to improving the lives
of people affected by HIV?**

**Great opportunities currently exist for
volunteering within the supportive
environment of Coventry House**

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Note from the President

Sam Venning

World AIDS Day continues to provide an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for PLHIV and commemorate people who have died. PLWHA Victoria again hosted the official launch of World AIDS Day in Victoria with an event in the gardens of Parliament House, Melbourne. This year's theme, 'HIV is still here', is a reminder that HIV can affect anyone, the epidemic is not over and we must affirm our efforts to drive down HIV transmission. The event included a number of speakers including the Honourable David Davis, Minister for Health, two speakers from PLWHA Victoria Positive Speakers Bureau talking about their experiences of living with HIV and some opening remarks from me.

Minister Davis used the launch to highlight the recent announcement that the world's premier scientific and community event on HIV/AIDS, the International AIDS Conference, will be held in Melbourne in 2014. This is the largest regular HIV/AIDS conference of its kind and brings together a wide range of people working in the field of HIV. Researchers, policy makers, clinicians, community agencies and PLHIV, come together every two years for the International AIDS Conference to build relationships and share knowledge. The conference will provide an opportunity to highlight Victorian and Australian community and scientific work on HIV/AIDS at an international level.

Minister Davis also noted in his speech, that clinical trials for HIV rapid testing are currently underway in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane sexual health centres

with the purpose of trialling new technologies, which will encourage more people to test for HIV and manage their health more effectively.

PLWHA Victoria and other HIV prevention and health promotion agencies are fortunate to have the support of the Victorian government. Strong promotion of HIV and sexually transmissible infection testing is central to Victoria's continuing stable HIV transmission rates and prevention response. Minister Davis also noted the recent addition of \$200,000 to support research into the psychosocial effects of ageing amongst people living with HIV in Victoria.

Two significant developments over the past year include results from the HPTN 052 trial in May and the new United Nations Declaration to fight AIDS. Results from the HPTN 052 trial in May this year showing that antiretroviral therapy is up to 96% effective in preventing sexual transmission in heterosexual partners is tremendously exciting. This data supports the growing evidence supporting the benefits of starting HIV treatments early. Even a 96% reduction in HIV risk is not enough to abandon other prevention strategies. We are also yet to see a similar trial with gay couples.

This year also saw the United Nations agree to a new Declaration to fight AIDS. Key features of the United Nations Declaration are bold new HIV prevention targets for the global community to reach by 2015. These global targets include reducing sexual transmission of HIV by 50%; reducing HIV transmissions through injecting drug use by 50%; and eliminating mother-to-child HIV transmissions – all by 2015. For the first time, the UN was able to agree to list gay men,



Pictured: Sam Venning Photo: Andrew Henshaw

injecting drug users and sex workers, along with other key populations at risk (specifically youth and women). These key groups are to be given high priority by all countries in their HIV prevention plans. Specific mention is also made of the need to eliminate travel restrictions for PLHIV.

While Australia has responded well over the past 30 years, and over the past four years (HIV transmission rates in Victoria have remained relatively stable) we must continue to look for ways to improve. Leading community campaigners suggest that Australia has the skills and resources to set more ambitious targets. Finally on behalf of the board, staff and volunteers at PLWHA Victoria I wish you the best for the festive season and the New Year ahead.

World AIDS Day 2011

Health Minister supports WAD

2011 marks the seventh consecutive year that PLWHA Victoria has launched World AIDS Day at the Victorian Parliament. With a change of Government we were honoured when the Hon. David Davis Minister for Health accepted our invitation to formally launch World AIDS Day.

The launch is held in the serene, picturesque Parliament Gardens with the city skyline as a backdrop. A perfect setting to remind us of the 30 years since the HIV epidemic started, to remember those who have lost their lives to AIDS and to acknowledge the enormous scientific and medical advances.

The launch is attended by people from all walks of life and fields of work – from PLHIV sector workers, members of the PLHIV community, parliamentarians and HIV researchers and HIV pharmaceutical representatives. The audience reflects the diversity of the Australian response to HIV and we thank them for attending the launch.

The Health Minister spoke about his commitment to the HIV sector and about the importance of the work of the Positive Speakers Bureau in educating the community and reducing HIV stigma.

Our PLHIV speakers spoke passionately about their individual journeys both before and after being diagnosed and the immense challenges they faced. We wish to acknowledge the sponsorship of the launch by Abbott Virology.

Shane Boyd



What a privilege it is to share my story of good and bad life experiences. To share a time in my life that was dark. To share a time in my life that is joyous. There was a time when there wasn't much to look forward to, that was my reality.

No drive, no passion, no desire for more. I felt I was a passenger on a train, not knowing where it was going, but knowing it was going too fast to get off. I've been a small business owner for most of my adult life. My family were in business, so it seemed like the logical choice. I thought I knew a little, that was a little cocky even.

In my now joyous world of life coaching we call it the 'shiny thing' syndrome. Success was never an option for me - it just was a way of being. Successful businesses, successful relationships and a supportive family. The darkness came when I looked outside my relationship and business success for gratification. Instant gratification that took me to another place, drugs, sex and partying. All to excess.

My cocky naïve nature was sure to be lured by the power of drugs. A power I'd never experienced before and overwhelming desire.

This was the dark side. It didn't take long before I was engulfed by the instant gratification that this lifestyle was providing.



Not for one minute looking back to see the destruction being left behind me.

My relationship crashed first, my million dollar business collapsed. My relationship with my family destroyed - all within 18 months. Years of hard work gone, literally.

The worst was yet to come. This darkness stayed, dark clouds never parting - a constant. It was 2007.

I'd been more than reckless, I was playing with fate. Pushing the boundaries. Still playing in the world of sex and drugs, not caring about the past. My health I took for granted. I never had to worry in the past. I received my HIV diagnosis – positive.

Was it a surprise? No, it was just a result. By nature I was a risk-taker. It wasn't the end. HIV can be treated, I kept telling myself. I was dealing with this alone, not knowing the real impact on me. On my friends. My family.... my environment. In fact when I told people, they seemed more upset than me. I was confused. It wasn't a big deal, I deserved it.

So began the recovery of my life. Restoring my integrity has been the single biggest struggle I have ever embarked upon.

A journey, restoring trust, relationships and my own self worth. 'Taking yourself on' takes courage and commitment.

HIV is but part of my story, but the reason I stand here today. HIV is still here, in our community. It lives with me, a reminder of those dark days. Out of those days I've developed strength and courage I never knew were there. Strength to speak openly about who I am and what my purpose is in life. I have the opportunity now to contribute from the heart.

I live a healthy life these days. I am an example of the resolve with which people can overcome the odds. My work with the Speakers Bureau humbles me. It enables me to enter the world of our teenagers. To tell my story. To speak not as a parent or teacher, but as an uncle or family friend or big brother. The work we do is so important - and I thank PLWHA Victoria for giving us this opportunity. I see the difference we make. The opportunity to talk to teenagers is heart warming. To educate, talk, chat and listen to their concerns is a privilege.

I talk to them about my past irresponsibility, of being captivated by instant gratification and consumed by darkness. My message is to take responsibility, not only for our own well being, but to look out for our mates.

Actions taken in the moment can seem so harmless, but as we know, the smallest action can have the most profound effect on our lives. Our mindset, the power of our mind to create the reality we live in, can determine the rest of our life, in a heartbeat. Education and communication is still the key.



Pictured: The Hon. Minister for Health David Davis delivering his World AIDS Day speech in Parliament Gardens. Photo: Paul Kidd & Vic Perri



Pictured: Shane Boyd member of the PLWHA Victoria Positive Speakers Bureau. Photo: Paul Kidd & Vic Perri

PLWHA Victoria speakers talk to young people about making informed decisions and having the power to say no. We talk about boundaries, not fearing we won't be liked, we talk about being empowered to be the best we can be. We talk about making mistakes, getting the help we need by talking to someone.

Today my life is on track my businesses are successful and I'm working hard. I coach and mentor business owners, managers and athletes to be the best they can be. I take my medication every day as a reminder of the dark days.

I also take care of myself both physically and spiritually. I'm proud of who I am. My purpose is to work with people, wherever and whomever I meet.

I'm an ordinary guy being the best version of me I can be. If I leave you with one message today, I encourage you to be the best version of you can be. Time flies as we learn by our mistakes and our experiences. By sharing the story of my mistakes, we all come a little closer to a future, when HIV is not here.

Heather Ellis



I have been living with HIV for 17 years. And I am still here. But there was a time, back in 1997, when I nearly wasn't here. I nearly died of AIDS.

Just as HIV was rapidly destroying my immune system, scientists made a breakthrough controlling HIV replication. This discovery enabled me to survive. Not only did I survive, I went to university, I went on to marry, I went on to have three healthy children – free of HIV and because of HIV treatments I continue being healthy, being a mother and being a productive member of our society.

My body has responded to HIV medications so well that HIV is undetectable. But HIV is still here, in this city today. HIV is silently replicating. It is not until people start feeling unwell that they may discover they are HIV positive, or until an HIV test is required for a job, life insurance, a test during pregnancy or in some cases, like me, for travel. Or it could be a late stage diagnosis of HIV with an AIDS defining illness. HIV is still here, because people do not have regular sexual health checkups. HIV is still here because people choose to ignore that it is still here, and have unprotected sex. I became HIV positive through unprotected sex while travelling overseas. My story is not uncommon. I was a young Australian on a journey of a lifetime.

I was on a solo world motorcycle journey and after nearly 14 months in Africa, I was very aware of my personal safety.

Then in Mali in North Africa, I was camped at the security compound

of the Bamako University when I was invited to stay with an American aid volunteer and her Malian boyfriend. I had a few beers and was later not fully in control to ward off the advances of a man and ended up having unprotected sex. When I reached London, I was not sick. I'd naively put the experience in Africa behind me. After all, it was only one time. I was preparing for the second leg of my world motorcycle journey through Russia and Central Asia and to get a three month Russian visa, an HIV test was required. I needed this visa because I'd enrolled to study Russian at the Moscow University during the winter of '95.

When the test came back positive, my world ended. The GP said I had about five years to live and advised I return to Australia where I would get better medical care. I was given a pamphlet for an HIV women's support group and sent on my way.

I did not return home as the GP advised, but instead read all I could on HIV in an effort to delay the grim reaper. In 1995, death from AIDS was more a probability than the remote possibility it is now. Back then, there was only AZT and no hope of long term survival. I opted not to take AZT as the side effects were making people sicker than the virus. And at that point, I was still healthy. I contacted the HIV positive women's group and realised HIV was not a quick death sentence. I met women who had been living with HIV for five or more years. They were still healthy, they were an inspiration, it was the inspiration I needed.

I packed my motorcycle, and in the spring of 1996, rode home via Central Asia, Russia, China and Vietnam.

By the time I reached Kazakhstan, I was always very tired and was losing my hair. It had been less than two years since I was infected with HIV and already it was rapidly replicating and destroying my immune system. By the time I rode into Hanoi in

Vietnam I was on the brink of having AIDS. I put my motorbike in storage and took the next flight to Australia and made a surprise visit to my parents. I had not told them I had HIV. I did not want to worry them. I did not want to face their rejection. Instead, when they asked about my poor state of health, I said I'd picked up a particularly bad bout of gastro in rural China.

After just two weeks at home, I knew I was now dying. I advised my parents I'd found a job and place to stay in the city. In fact, I had contacted the HIV clinic and was admitted to hospital. I had AIDS and the medical staff held little hope for my survival. I know this because they kept insisting I contact my parents and also asked if I wanted to see a chaplain. I said no, insisting I was not going to die. Fortunately, with the help of a new generation of HIV medications, my body quickly rebuilt its immune system and was able to fight off the opportunistic infections killing me. 10 days later, I was out of hospital and home for Christmas. My health was rapidly improving thanks to these latest HIV medications and the care of Dr David Bradford – an HIV specialist.

Two months later I was at university studying journalism. I graduated and worked for News Ltd. I got married to an HIV positive man. It was also the year I told my parents about being HIV positive. Of course they were shocked and grieved but over the years they think about HIV even less than I do. I had put off having children.

While the risk of the baby contracting the virus was very small, it was still a risk. An unplanned pregnancy made the decision for me. And on learning that babies born to Positive women on HIV medications, are born HIV negative, I felt confident and happy about having not one, but three babies. As a single mum with three children, I have no fears for the future. New treatments are being developed. While not a cure for HIV – it is the next best thing. But I am still fearful.

Not of HIV, but of ordinary people in our society who still see HIV as a death sentence. This is stigma.

I have felt this stigma in subtle ways. And these are the worse kind. I am fearful because of the impact this stigma could have, not on me, but on my children who are still too young for me to tell. Stigma is the battle we need to fight in combating HIV. Stigma causes people to hide from HIV. Stigma causes HIV to still be here.

If by some miracle, everyone diagnosed with HIV globally, suddenly had access to HIV medications, which can reduce the virus in their bodies to undetectable levels. If everyone who has had unprotected sex suddenly went off and had a sexual health check-up, I am sure we would be here today saying... HIV is hardly here.



Pictured: Heather Ellis, member of the PLWHA Victoria Positive Speakers Bureau. Photo: Paul Kidd & Vic Perri



Pictured: The Hon. Minister for Health David Davis and Sam Venning President of PLWHA Victoria. Photo: Paul Kidd & Vic Perri

Living with HIV: a blessing in disguise

James May reflects on working and volunteering in the HIV sector in 2011

Staying active in the world is so important when you're living with HIV. While I'm often physically well, the emotional burden can force me into isolation at times. I can use up so much energy trying to rise above the negative self talk that I can wind up with very few resources to spare for anything else. Although I feel like I've got the upper hand most of the time, now and then it still drags me down and I find it tough to face the world.

I do my best to use HIV as a catalyst to create the life I want in terms of personal development. I try to use it to motivate me to live life more fully. But the fact is that it does hold me back at times. When I get run down or the negative self talk takes over, the last thing I want to do is put myself out there and take on a work challenge or meet new people.

There are many times when I feel like I'm breaking new ground, then my mind and body undermines my progress. I crawl back into my comfort zone, feeling like I just can't rise above my limitations. While there's definitely something to be said about appreciating where you're at, personally I'd like to see my world keep expanding.

I honestly believe HIV came into my life to shake things up and push me forward. It's about encouraging me to grow and face my fears and create a better life in all respects. After quite a few years of letting it shut me down, I realised I wasn't getting 'the message.' HIV was actually here to help me realise my potential. It was a change of perception that seemed to happen overnight.

It went from being a terrible mistake to a blessing in disguise.

A big part of that has been putting myself out there and connecting with people as much as I can. It's been letting go of the past and approaching life in a whole new way. It's learning to trust that I do have gifts to share with the world and that I can connect with people and make a difference.

*“I honestly believe
HIV came into my
life to shake things
up and push me
forward”*

I've always been a bit of a loner, even before HIV. I know it's the result of growing up in a homophobic community and the domestic violence in our family home. I know it goes back to ten years of drugs and alcohol and the unhealthy relationships that went with it. That experience clouded my view. I thought going it alone was a reasonable way to cope in the world.

The diagnosis changed my perspective completely. Being isolated and HIV-positive was unbearable.

I recall when I first moved to Melbourne and I didn't know a soul. I was unemployed and sick and living in a rooming house in St Kilda. It made me realise that being alone was not a great way to be. It cut me off from all kinds of possibilities. It was dull and predictable and it stunted my growth.

I was quite set in my ways before HIV and it's been hard to accept that maybe things weren't the way they seemed. I still feel like I'm repeating the same mistakes at times, holding myself back, approaching the world through familiar eyes. I tell myself that I'm not capable of rising above my fears and doubts.

Maybe it's because it really is hard to put myself out there some days. Sometimes I step into the world and I feel so knotted up in the stomach that my whole body hurts. It's hard to stop my mind racing long enough to focus and connect with anyone. One minute I'm frozen, the next I'm trembling with anxiety. Of course I know it's all about self esteem and mental health – and living with HIV is a big part of that.

So I take a step back and retreat to my flat. Thank God for emails and text messages – it makes it so much easier to keep up appearances. While it frustrates the hell out of me, I still have to check out of the world now and then and nurture myself with positive thoughts. I have to take time out in nature, meditate or thrash it out at the gym.

Thankfully those times of isolation are getting shorter and my ability to be in the world is growing.

It's a process that can't be forced though, regardless of whether other people are cramming as much work and social activity into their days as they can. I have no desire to go to that extreme either. I just want to keep my physical and mental health in check and make a worthwhile contribution to the world.

HIV has helped me realise what I want from life. It's helped me detach from what society says I should think and feel and given me the space to see more clearly. It's given me the courage to do things my way and strike a healthy balance. Making a contribution to the HIV sector has been a great way to connect with the world this year.

Getting involved in the sector has boosted my self esteem and eased me back into working life in a gentle way.

It's a big help knowing you're working with people who understand what you've been through and the transition you're trying to make.



HIV futures seven
Making positive lives count

IT'S NOT TOO LATE to participate in HIV Futures Seven. Make sure your story is included. Tell us what living with HIV is like for you. The deadline for completing the survey has been extended to 27 February, 2012. Fill it in online or contact your local HIV/AIDS organisation for a hardcopy.

www.hivfutures.org.au

Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University

HIV Futures Seven is the seventh national survey of Australian people living with HIV conducted by the Living with HIV program at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. This is an anonymous survey that asks positive people about their health, treatments, work and financial situation. The survey is officially supported by the National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA), the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) and the Australasian Society of HIV Medicine (ASHM).

HIV Futures Seven runs from now until February 27, 2012. A hardcopy survey booklet can be posted to you, simply contact the PLWHA Victoria office on 03 9863 8733. This can be returned anonymously and free of charge via the envelope attached to the booklet.

The survey can also be filled out online at www.hivfutures.org.au.

For more information you can contact (freecall) 1800 064 398 or hivfutures@latrobe.edu.au

Make sure your experience counts!

Hep B 101

Louisa Walsh

Hep C: Take Control Project Co-ordinator

Hepatitis B is a virus that causes inflammation in the liver. It is spread through the blood or sexual fluids (vaginal fluids or semen) of an infected person entering the blood stream of a non-infected person. It is also spread from mother to baby during birth.

Most people (95%) who get infected with hepatitis B as an adult will have a short term (acute) illness, and clear the virus naturally. However, people who also have HIV are much more likely to develop long-term (chronic) hepatitis B due to their weakened immune systems. Also, if a person contracts hepatitis B from their mother during birth they have a 90% chance of going on to have chronic infection with hepatitis B. In Australia, around 165,000 people have chronic hepatitis B, with most of these chronic infections occurring in people who come from countries with a high incidence of hepatitis B (eg South East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Pacific Islands).

Unfortunately, hepatitis B has another 'sting in the tail' for people who are immunocompromised, such as someone with HIV. If you have contracted hepatitis B in the past, and cleared it naturally, it can remerge when your immune system is compromised. If you have HIV and think you may have been exposed to hepatitis B in the past, speak to your specialist about tests or monitoring you may need.

The good news about hepatitis B is that it can be prevented.

- Vaccination is available. Newborns, early adolescents (10-13 years), people with HIV, people with hepatitis C, people who inject drugs, people in custodial settings, and household contacts of someone with hepatitis B are all able to get the vaccine for free in Victoria. The vaccination is 3 injections over 6 months, and provides lifelong protection from the virus for most people who receive it.

- Avoid blood-to-blood contact. Don't share any injecting equipment; ensure tattoos and piercings are done using sterilized equipment; clean up any blood spills; cover open wounds or cuts; don't share personal equipment which may draw blood such as toothbrushes and razors.

- Practice safe sex. Use condoms, lube, gloves, and either don't share sex toys or make sure they are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between users and condoms (including femdoms) are used on them.

- Protect yourself against, or treat for, other STIs. STIs can lead to ulcers and breaks in the skin of the genital area, which can increase the risk of contracting hepatitis B.

- Expectant mothers should know their hepatitis B status, and tell their doctor or midwife. In Australia, certain steps are taken by doctors delivering babies if they know the mother has hepatitis B, to help prevent the baby contracting the virus.



Get all your questions answered!

Hepatitis Infoline: Call to talk to an Educator about hepatitis B or C
Information: We can answer questions and mail information to you
Support: We can provide support for a range of issues and concerns
Referral: We can refer you to other organisations and services

Hepatitis Infoline 1800 703 003

Translating and Interpreting Service 131 450 

 **Hepatitis Victoria**
info@hepvic.org.au
www.hepvic.org.au

Untreated chronic hepatitis B can cause a lot of serious health problems, such as cirrhosis, liver failure or liver cancer. However, there are effective treatments available to lessen the damage the virus causes to the liver. While this is not a 'cure', it does make the virus more manageable and improves outcomes for people with chronic hepatitis B so they can live a long and healthy life. Treatment for chronic hepatitis B can only be given at certain times, so it is important for anyone with chronic hepatitis B to be referred to a liver clinic for monitoring.

If you think you may be at risk of having hepatitis B, it is important to talk to your GP about being tested.

If you have never been vaccinated, talk to your GP about getting a vaccination to protect yourself.

If you have chronic hepatitis B, make sure you are referred to a liver clinic so you can be regularly monitored and treated when the time is right.

If you have any questions about hepatitis B, please call the Hepatitis Infoline on 1800 703 003.

CDDS will continue until at least 31 March

On the 29 November 2011 Tuesday Treasurer Wayne Swan confirmed that the Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme (CDDS) will continue until at least 31 March 2012.

"Medicare Services payments which are expected to increase by \$231 million in 2011-12, primarily stemming from the extension of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme (CDDS) to 31 March 2012 as a result of the Senate disallowing the determination to close the Scheme. The closure of the CDDS remains the Government's policy"¹

This confirms the advice previously received by the Australian Dental Association that the CDDS scheme will not close on 31 December 2011 as indicated earlier this year.

CDDS is for eligible people with chronic condition and complex care needs. Individuals can claim up to \$4,250 in Medicare Benefits for eligible comprehensive dental services including dental assessment, preventive services, extractions, fillings, restorative works and dentures.

To be eligible for CDDS:

- you must have a chronic medical condition (such as HIV)
- must be receiving ongoing care from a multidisciplinary team, which includes your GP and at least two other health care providers (GP Management Plan)
- your oral health must be impacting on, or likely to impact on, your health
- you must have a referral from your GP (or HIV doctor).

The referral is presented to a private dental clinic that may bulk bill Medicare, or may require that you pay in full for the treatment and seek a refund for a portion of the treatment from Medicare. When choosing a private clinic for your treatment, discuss this with the reception before making an appointment, so that you are aware of your prior to commencing your first visit.²

For further information regarding accessing the CDDS or for a list of HIV friendly dentist's please contact PLWHA Victoria on 03 9863 8733 or info@plwhavictoria.org.au

References

1. Australian Dental Association, 2011. Viewed 12/12/2011 <http://www.ada.org.au/newsroom/article,documentid,344539.aspx>
2. People Living with HIV/AIDS Victoria. HIV & Oral Health - Information series for PLHIV. October 2011.

Positive Women Victoria

Supporting Women Living with HIV/AIDS Victoria

Positive Women Victoria is a support and advocacy organisation for HIV positive women, established in 1988 by women living with HIV.

We actively support half of all women living with HIV in Victoria and we provide a safe and comfortable environment that is confidential. Positive Women Victoria offers peer support, health retreats, the latest information and news around HIV, and social and advocacy events for women living with HIV in Victoria.

Peer Support

Our office is open to all positive women from Tuesday – Friday 10am – 3pm. Michelle Wesley, our Peer Support Co-ordinator works Tuesday, Thursday & Friday. Michelle is also available at the PLC every second Thursday between 12noon – 4pm

Michelle will be at the PLC on Thursday December 15, and will return to the PLC every second Thursday (to coincide with Pantry) in the new-year

The PLC is a safe space for HIV positive people. Women living with HIV and their children are encouraged to make use of the PLC and the various services on offer. The PLC is located at 51 Commercial Rd, South Yarra.

Michelle is also available to catch up with you at a convenient location, if you are unable to make it in to our office, or the PLC. Please ring Michelle on 9921 0860 to make a time to meet at a convenient location.

Connecting with you!

Positive Women Victoria produces a Member Newsletter which is sent to members every two months by email and print.

Our newsletters include advice and information from our Health Promotion Co-ordinator, along with information on our events, and information on other HIV services and agencies.

If you are a positive woman and not currently receiving the "Positive Women Newsletter", please call our office on 9921 0860 or email admin@positivewomen.org.au to start receiving this Newsletter.

Positive Women in the Community

Positive Women Victoria are receiving more regular requests from media to talk to our members and share their stories with the broader non-positive community.

Positive Women are happy to announce we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the PLWHA Victoria Positive Speakers Bureau, and will now collaborate in providing HIV positive speakers to speak to schools, community groups and health professionals

If you are interested in being considered for future media opportunities, or if you are interested in training to become a public speaker, please contact Michelle Wesley at the Positive Women Victoria office on 9921 0860 or email support@positivewomen.org.au

If you require support, are interested in providing other positive women with support, need resources or are interested in attending our events, please contact us on 9921 0860 or email support@positivewomen.org.au

Office Hours

Positive Women Victoria is open Tuesday – Friday from 10am – 3pm. We are located at the Queen Vic Women's Centre, Level 1, 210 Lonsdale Street Melbourne.

Relocation to Coventry House

Our office is relocating to Coventry House, Suite 1, 111 Coventry Street Southbank.

We will be officially opening at Coventry House on Monday 9 January 2012, our team is looking forward to welcoming our members to the new office at Coventry House.



MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday December 1 2011 – World AIDS Day

NAPWA calls for Australia to eliminate HIV transmission, diagnoses by 2018

The National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NAPWA) is today calling for our nation to commit to adopting new technology to fight HIV transmission, with the goal of eliminating transmission and new diagnoses before the end of the decade.

NAPWA President Robert Mitchell said today that 2011 marks a significant turning-point in the HIV epidemic.

"We now have compelling evidence that HIV treatments not only prolong lives but also reduces the chance of HIV transmission."

"NAPWA believes that by adopting a range of new technologies and by setting bold new targets in our National HIV Strategies, we can achieve virtual elimination of HIV transmission and AIDS diagnoses in Australia by 2018."

Mr Mitchell said that the strategies should include:

- Delivering new awareness campaigns targeting people with HIV and those at risk of HIV infection, particularly gay men
- Promoting HIV testing and making rapid HIV testing available
- Removing arbitrary restrictions on HIV treatments
- Addressing disincentives to HIV treatment uptake

"The 30 years that has been marked since the discovery of the virus has brought us to a point where the development of effective HIV treatments have renewed many lives, and prevented many deaths. The shift for countries such as Australia, and their populations that can access modern treatments and advanced care is profound," Mr Mitchell said.

"The effect for many HIV positive people living in Australia is that their health and well being are improved, and the levels of AIDS related deaths and illness have dramatically diminished. New scientific understandings of both HIV treatment, and impacts on HIV prevention, have brought us to a new chapter in this story."

Proposed Australian targets for HIV prevention:

- Reducing sexual transmission of HIV among MSM by 80% by 2015
- Sustaining Australia's exceptionally low rates of HIV transmission from injecting drug use; among sex workers and clients; and from mother to child transmission

Proposed Australian target for HIV treatment:

- Having 90% of people with HIV on antiretroviral treatment by 2013.

If these targets were reached, Australia should come close to the elimination of HIV transmission and new AIDS diagnoses by 2015, and fully realise that goal by 2018.

Positive Attitude

Positive Attitude extends an invitation to people affected by HIV and the GLBT community to a traditional 3 course Christmas Day lunch.

*Sunday 25 December
at 12.00pm*

Venue: Old Fitzroy Oval, St. Georges Road, Fitzroy
(Next to Grandstand)

Public Transport: Tram 112 from Collins along
Brunswick Street to Tram stop 20

Small charge of ONLY \$10.00
(Complimentary Champagne on arrival or BYO)

RSVP: Monday 19 December
Contact Yvonne on 9471 0033 or Max on 9478 0812

*We ask that you bring a small gift of approximately \$5.00
value to set under the tree for Kris Kringle.*



**“Before doing the workshop I felt so alone.
Now I feel so much more confident to deal
with the challenges that lie ahead”**

Phoenix

A weekend workshop for those who have recently been diagnosed HIV-positive. Please contact Vic Perri for the next Phoenix workshop dates or further information 03 9863 8733 or info@plwhavictoria.org.au

INFORMATION • SUPPORT • REFERRAL

HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH

Connect

1800 038 125



www.connectline.com.au

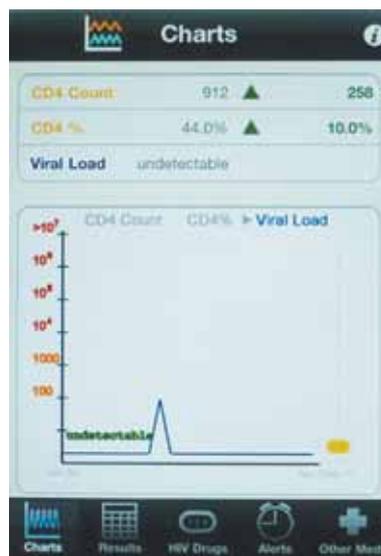
How “smart” is your Smart Phone?

Vic Perri - Health Promotion Officer

We use our mobile phones for calling, texting, playing our favourite tracks and some of us find it hard to resist spending endless amount time on Facebook. That's all fine for enhancing our social lives but how can we make use of our so called “smart” phone to actually enhance our management of our HIV. There are two examples of application software or “apps” that can be quite practical and help us to be more in control of our health.

The first one is “iStayHealthy”. This is a neat app where you can actually record your counts such as CD4, percentage and viral load and come up with a chart. You can also record your treatment regimen from the now long list of available HIV antivirals complete with a colour picture of the pills attached. No more trying to guess the name of that little white diamond shaped one or the round orange one. There is also provision to develop a list of any other medications or even complementary therapies if you wish. “iStayHealthy” can be downloaded from iTunes.

Another helpful app is the HIV iChart of drug interactions developed by the University of Liverpool, England. While you can find full details on their more comprehensive website www.hiv-druginteractions.org.au this app neatly summarises data of all the HIV antivirals and many other medications. One starts by choosing one or more HIV drugs from the list then choosing one or more medications to get an idea of what interaction is to be expected from the combination of the drugs you have chosen. The results are presented as a traffic light system to indicate the recommendation with a brief summary of the interaction



Photos: Vic Perri

and this description is graded as very low, low, moderate, high in terms of reliability or the quality of evidence. HIV iChart can be downloaded from both the Apple iTunes Store and from www.androidzoom.com

Why have all this information on your mobile phone? It can be quite useful when you are seeing a health professional other than your own doctor who usually manages your HIV. You may need to quickly access your current counts, treatments information or it may be handy to check on any potential interactions between your meds and a treatment that may be prescribed for you. Other health professionals may include, for example, a dentist, sexual health nurse or nutritionist. It can also be useful if you are travelling interstate or overseas. Getting the best of care from a health professional depending

on the reason we are seeing them may be optimised if they know our full medical history.

Of course, the major benefit of having this type of information is all about knowing more about our HIV. It's about having a sense of control and we all know that the more we know about our bodies and our HIV the more chance of success we have in managing it and having a better quality of life.

Please note that these smart phone applications are not intended to replace the advice from your HIV specialist and you should always consult your physician before acting on any information from these applications.

INFORMATION SERIES FOR PLHIV

HIV & ORAL HEALTH

Available now online @ www.plwhavictoria.org.au
to receive a copy in the post contact 03 9863 8733
or email info@plwhavictoria.org.au

INFORMATION SERIES FOR PLHIV

HIV & HEP C

Available now online @ www.plwhavictoria.org.au
to receive a copy in the post contact 03 9863 8733
or email info@plwhavictoria.org.au

INFORMATION SERIES FOR PLHIV

HIV & CANCER

Available now online @ www.plwhavictoria.org.au
to receive a copy in the post contact 03 9863 8733
or email info@plwhavictoria.org.au

Christmas and New Year Office Closures

People Living with HIV/AIDS Victoria

Closes: 5.00pm Friday 23 December 2011
Reopens: 9.00am Tuesday 3 January 2012

The HIV & Sexual Health Connect Line

Closes: 6.00pm Friday 23 December 2011
Reopens: 10.00am Tuesday 3 January 2012

Positive Women Victoria

Closes: 3.00pm Friday 23 December 2011
Reopens: 9.00am Monday 9 January 2012
Please note that Positive Women Victoria will be moving on Monday 9 January 2012 into:
Coventry House
Suite 1 111 Coventry Street
Southbank VIC 3006

Straight Arrows

Closes: 4.00pm Friday 16 December 2011
Reopens: 9.30am Monday 16 January 2012

Positive Living Centre

Closes: 4.00pm Friday 23 December 2011
Reopens: 10.00am Tuesday 3 January 2012

Emergency Contact List

Victoria PEP Hotline 1800 889 887
Lifeline 13 11 14
Mensline 1300 789 978
Alfred Hospital, Emergency Department
03 9276 3405
Nurse-On-Call 1300 606 024



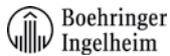
Photo: Andrew Henshaw

*PLWHA Victoria wishes all of our
Poslink readers a safe and relaxing Christmas
and a Happy New Year.*



Acknowledgement

PLWHA Victoria would like to thank our sponsors for providing unrestricted educational grants to fund Poslink and Treatment Interactive Events.



Save the Environment!



If you wish to do your bit for the environment and receive Poslink via email, please send your name and email address to:

poslink@plwhavictoria.org.au

Poslink is also available online to download at:

www.plwhavictoria.org.au

Membership application

All details provided will be treated as strictly confidential.

I wish to become a member of People Living with HIV/AIDS Victoria and to receive all privileges of said membership. I agree to abide by the Rules of the organisation at all times. I understand I can obtain copies of the Rules of the organisation from the PLWHA Victoria office.

Please Full Membership
tick I am HIV-positive and am able to provide verification of this if required.

Associate Membership
I do not wish to disclose my HIV status, I am HIV-negative or I do not know my HIV status.

Name	Signed
------	--------

Address	Postcode
---------	----------

Telephone	Email Address
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Please fax or post your membership application to:

PLWHA Victoria
Suite 1, 111 Coventry St
Southbank VIC 3006



I do not wish to be contacted by postal mail.

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