

Resurrecting the Body Politic

by John Hannah

Take it from me, gentle readers, raising consciousness is hard work. Particularly in these parts, where the population is sparse and a certain narcotic political correctness remains unchallenged by active debate. The slumber of thought with respect to AIDS is especially deep, which is not surprising, as the realities one must wake up to are complicated, disturbing and highly subjective. But Vermonters living with HIV and those who treat them must nevertheless throw off the cozy blanket assumptions beneath which we have been encouraged to snuggle and face some bracing facts.

The fact is that people living with HIV are guinea pigs. It is a situation born of necessity, that we are routinely prescribed highly toxic drugs to slow the progression of our disease. For many of us, these drugs have proved successful, yet we cannot lose sight of the fact that HIV remains incurable. We rely on the expectation that new drugs will continue to be developed for our use in delaying the onset of full-blown AIDS, and on the hope that we may continue to tolerate these drugs until a cure is found.

Understand that "tolerate" has a different meaning for people fighting HIV than for the average citizen on the street. Our lives literally depend on being able to tolerate

"Just Say Yes"

these drugs indefinitely, so we can't afford to be deterred by mere tummy aches, nausea, headaches, fatigue, diarrhea, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, nerve damage, diabetes or a host of other side-effects that would be viewed as intolerable by the average person. I had to put up with vomiting every day for two months before my doctor and I decided to give up on AZT and Crixivan.

It is perhaps understandable that the medical community in Vermont rates our current straits as less dire than those of PWA's ten years ago, when swift progression to death was all but assured. But what they persistently fail to recognize, in my experience, is the psychological gravity of life on death row. Precious little is done to alleviate the stress of our situation. I have yet to meet a PWA in the state of Vermont, or anywhere else, who

ASSUMES that he or she will survive the disease. Designer anti-depressants are handed out like Tic-Tacs, but any attempts on our part to obtain prescribed sedatives are met with extreme and sanctimonious resistance.

This Puritanical attitude towards prescribing potentially addictive drugs to people with HIV and AIDS makes no sense whatsoever. For one thing, the state of Vermont prohibits the distribution of more than one month's supply of any psychotropic substance at a time. This strictly regulated dispensation is a good thing; it makes the abuse of these substances virtually impossible. Furthermore, the fact that patients seek to alleviate their stress in cooperation with their doctors should not be discounted. It should suggest that we are not trying to get away with something, we are not trying to hoodwink anybody. If all I wanted was a cheap high, I could pick up the phone and get any drug I wanted within a few hours. But I don't. I care about my health and I'm not going to jeopardize my precarious well-being that lightly. But the fact remains that I am

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Lesbian Cancer Support group

660-8386

Men's Health Project

POB 5248 • Elmwood Ave. • Burlington VT 05401 • 863-2437 • (800) 649-2437

North Star Holistic Health Care

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Tribal Remedies

(ALANA Community Organization)

8 Williston • Brattleboro VT 05301 • 254-2972

Twin State Women's Network

POB 3 • Cavendish VT 05142-0003 • 226-7807 • Margoc@mail.tds.net • http://www.dartmouth.edu/~hivnet/orgs/twsn1.html

VT Dept. of Health, Office of Minority Health

108 Cherry St. • POB 70 • Burlington VT 05402 • 863-7273

Vermont Women's Health Center

336 North Ave • Burlington VT 05401 • 863-1386

Alcoholics Anonymous

Burlington, 658-4221 • POB 5653, Burlington VT 05402
 * Sundays, 5pm, Christ Church Presbyterian, Redstone Camp., UVM.
 * Thursdays, 7pm, St. Paul's Cathedral, Cherry Street, 658-4221.
 Concord, NH 603-357-4300
 * Wednesdays, 7:30pm, First Congregational Church, North Main and Washington St.
 * Saturdays at 7pm (call for location). Hanover, NH
 * Thursdays at 6:30pm, Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center.
 Women only

Keene, NH (603) 357-4300

* Saturdays, 7-8:30pm Call for location.

Manchester, NH

* Sundays, 7:30pm, UU Church, 669 Union St.

Nashua, NH

— Mondays, 7:30pm, Nashua Unitarian Church.

Vermont Vegetarian Network

Patrick • 849 6359

HIV/AIDS

Hotlines

Vermont (800) 882-2437

NH (800) 752-2437

NY State (800) 541-2437

MA (617) 522-4090

ME (800) 851-2437

National: (800) 342-2437

National TTY: (800) 243-7889

Teen Hotline: (800) 234-TEEN

Addison County AIDS Network (ACAN)

Maureen 863-2437

AIDS Community Awareness Project (ACAP)

POB 608 • St. Johnsbury VT 05819 • 748-1149

AIDS Community Resource Network (ACoRN)

POB 2057 • Lebanon NH 03766 • (603) 448-2220/(800)816-2220 • acorn@valley.net

AIDS Services for the Monadnock Region

(800) 639-7903
 *Coffee Clatch meets Tuesdays from 1-2:30pm at 25 Roxbury St, Keene

Bennington Area AIDS Project

POB 1066 • Bennington VT 05201 • 442-4481 or (800) 845-2437

Brattleboro Area AIDS Project

POB 1486 • 67 Main St., 4th fl. • Brattleboro VT 05302 • 254-8263 or 254-4444 • sbell@sover.net

*Support group for PLWA, friends, and families. Wednesdays 1-2pm

*Support/discussion group for gay/bi men. 2nd and 4th Sundays 3-5pm

*Support group for HIV+ Women Greenfield MA.

*Mondays, 3:30-5:30pm. Call (413) 773-8888.

Comprehensive Care Clinics

Hotline: (800) 763-2460

Brattleboro: 257-8860

Burlington: 656-4594

Rutland: 747-1831

St. Johnsbury: 748-7361

Franklin County AIDS Network

Cricket 863-2437

National Association for People With AIDS

(202) 898-0414

NH/VT HIV Information Network on The Web

http://WWW.dartmouth.edu/~hivnet/

Rutland County AIDS Network

Mary Kathryn 775-5884

Vermont CARES

Vermont.CARES@Gte.net
 POB 5248 • Burlington VT 05402 •

863-2437 or (800) 649-2437

PO Box 6033 • Rutland, VT 05601 • 775-5884

PO Box 275 • Montpelier VT 05601 • 229-4560

PO Box 503 • St. Johnsbury VT 05819 748-9061

*Support groups for people living with HIV/AIDS in:

— Washington County, Melanie 229-4560

— Rutland County, Mary Kathryn 775-5884

— Burlington, Michael 863-2437

Vermont Deaf AIDS Project

POB 172 • Brattleboro VT 05302 •

(800) 257-1123/ (TTY)

(800) 253-0195/ fax 257-2013

VT Dept. of Health AIDS Program office

108 Cherry St. • POB 70 • Burlington 05402 • 863-7245

Vermont People With AIDS Coalition

POB 11 • Montpelier, VT 05601 •

229-5754 or (800) 69VTPWA •

vtpwac@sover.net •

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 140 Hospital Drive
 Bennington, VT 05201

BRATTLEBORO

Comprehensive Care Clinic
 257-8860
 Brattleboro Memorial Hospital
 9 Belmont Avenue
 Brattleboro, VT 05301

BURLINGTON

Community Health Center
 864-6309
 617 Riverside Ave., Suite 200
 Burlington, VT 05401

COLCHESTER

Family Health
 655-2055
 311 Malletts Bay Avenue
 P.O. Box 35
 Colchester, VT 05446

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Health Center, Inc.
 684-2275
 Box 185, Hill Street
 Danville, VT 05828

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Health Center
 472-3300
 High Street, P.O. Box 535
 Hardwick, VT 05843

ISLAND POND

Health Center
 723-4300
 Middle Street
 Island Pond, Vt. 05846

MIDDLEBURY

Open Door Clinic
 388-0137
 PO Box 95
 Middlebury, VT 05753

NEWPORT

Northeast Kingdom Health Center
 334-5008
 30 Coventry Street
 Newport, VT 05855

PUTNEY

Thomas Hoskins, M.D.
 387-5581
 Main St., P.O. Box 247
 Putney, VT 05346

RUTLAND

Comprehensive Care Clinic
 Rutland Regional Medical Center
 747-1831

ST. ALBANS

Robert Zelazo, M.D.
 524-9553
 2 Crest Road
 St. Albans, VT 05478

ST. JOHNSBURY

Comprehensive Care Clinic
 748-7476
 Northeast Vermont Regional Hospital
 Hospital Drive
 St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

WINDSOR

Leahy Hitchcock Clinic; 674-2193