

HAART BREAK: SURE, IT FEELS GOOD. BUT IS IT GOOD FOR YOU?

POZ

We're all over AIDS
APRIL 2003
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A POZ EXCLUSIVE BY DEGEN PENER

POSITIVE EXPOSURE

It was an open secret in Hollywood that **Herb Ritts** had HIV. But when the famed photographer died suddenly, the media never mentioned it—or his heroic battle against blindness. What's wrong with this picture?



ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

POZ Links



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Publisher's Letter 04.03



BACK IN '79, on Saturdays or Sundays, my mom would fill a plastic picnic basket with food. Then we'd load up the Volkswagen and drive two hours to visit my big brother, Rory, in "college." There were always other kids and families visiting, too, and I remember the visits as mostly fun. I was 9—"too young" to be told Rory wasn't in school, but in prison.

I dreamed of the day he would come home. At 9, I could have used a big brother. He promised he would teach me to throw a football and fight. I'm sure he meant it, but the few times he was out of prison, he was caught up in a drug addiction that hurt our family more than all his sentences combined. I never got good at sports—or at forgiving him. Fast forward a lifetime. Last fall, Anthony Lucenti, a counselor at New York's Mid-State Correctional Facility wrote to *POZ* asking if I would speak at the prison. I'm way too busy and almost always decline such requests. But this time I surprised myself by saying yes. Maybe because it would be a good opportunity to put the magazine's money where its mouth is. Or because inmates often need outside support to get the HIV prevention and treatment the rest of us take for granted. Or, deep down, because of Rory.

The morning of our visit I was up at 5 a.m., in a panic trying to organize my thoughts on note cards. What did I—a gay white Ivy League graduate—have to offer these guys? I panicked even more three hours later, inside Mid-State's huge gymnasium, facing a crowd of about 150 men, mostly African-American, who all looked like they could *really* throw a football and fight! What could they get out of listening to *me*? The first speaker, a former inmate turned corrections counselor, mesmerized them with his high-powered, street-talkin' tale of "life outside" with the virus. Clearly he was one of them. How was I going to pull this off?

The prison choir sang a few uplifting songs, then it was my turn. I cleared my throat and began talking about *POZ*—its history, its mission, how it tries to address many different people united by a common virus. Then I talked about how if you have HIV, being in care with a doctor is essential—whether or not you take meds. As soon as I directed my words specifically to people with HIV, the men seemed to squirm a bit. I realized then that acknowledging there were actual HIVers among us was, for them, really tough.

That gave me a little window into what positive prisoners are up against. That's when I started talking more personally about having HIV. I didn't want to make anyone uncomfortable, but after all, HIV was the one thing I had in common with at least some of the men. (True, I once had a brother in prison, but that was a lifetime ago.) If I had a chance to connect, HIV would be *it*. I talked about the stigma wrapped up in the fear and shame and guilt I feel at times. About the importance of being open about HIV because lies aren't a recipe for health. About how getting to where I am today took a long time. About the pleasant surprises I got from people I confided in. About how you have to have faith. I wrapped up by urging the audience to try to make Mid-State a safer, more understanding place for HIVers—whom I urged to consider telling their status to one person they could trust.

I think it worked. We had a lively (to say the least) Q&A period. Could someone get HIV from stepping in an infected person's blood on the floor? (No.) Did I think there was a government conspiracy to give AIDS to blacks? (No, but...) Did I believe in reinfection? (Sort of.) One inmate asked why no one from the prison's medical staff had bothered to attend the event. (Good point.) Finally, one inmate asked me point-blank the question I was most afraid of: How did I get HIV? From unprotected sex, I said. I couldn't go as far as to say "gay sex," but I added that drugs and alcohol played a role.

Later, when inmates lined up to get copies of *POZ*, it was their turn to open up to me. Some quietly confided their positive status, and how keeping it quiet added to the already huge stress of daily prison life, where privacy is virtually nonexistent. All I could do was listen.

But now I want to say to any of the inmates who showed up for the program that day and are reading this, I admire your—our—courage. As for my brother Rory, now out of jail and married: We're barely in touch, and I still haven't told him I'm gay or have HIV. But in the rare event that he is reading this, Rory, I want you to know: More than usual, you were with me that day, too. ◊


Brad Peebles

BRAD PEEBLES
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Photo: PEEBLES/BAU



Earvin "Magic" Johnson,
diagnosed HIV positive in 1991.

 GlaxoSmithKline

Nothing can change the fact
that I have HIV
But taking my medicines and keeping
a positive outlook is working for me

Individual results may vary.

COMBIVIR does not cure HIV infection/AIDS or prevent passing HIV to others.
COMBIVIR should be used with other HIV medicines.

COMBIVIR is a prescription product for HIV and contains two medicines proven to help people with HIV live longer, healthier lives. COMBIVIR is one tablet, taken twice a day, with or without food. COMBIVIR is used in more patients and more major combination studies than any other HIV therapy.

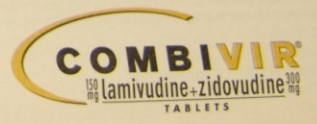
Safety Information

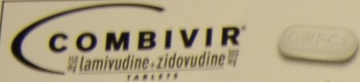
- Make sure to see your doctor regularly because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells
- A buildup of lactic acid in the blood and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported
- Low risk of problems with the pancreas in adults and adolescents
- The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose

When the time is right for you, ask your doctor about
COMBIVIR in combination with other HIV medicines.

Call 1-888-TREAT HIV/Visit www.treatHIV.com

Please see important information about COMBIVIR on adjacent page.





Patient Information about COMBIVIR Tablets

for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Infection
 Generic name: lamivudine/zidovudine tablets

Please read this information before you start taking COMBIVIR. Staying informed will help you to work more closely with your doctor and healthcare team to determine what is best for you. Remember, this information does not take the place of careful discussion with your doctor. You should remain under a doctor's care when using COMBIVIR and should not change or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.

What is COMBIVIR?

COMBIVIR is the brand name of a tablet that combines EPIVIR® Tablets (lamivudine tablets) [3TC] and RETROVIR® (zidovudine) [ZDV], two drugs which are used to treat HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV is the virus that causes AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

How does COMBIVIR work?

COMBIVIR is a combination of lamivudine (3-MV-u-deer) and zidovudine (Z-DOH-u-deer), two medicines (nucleoside analogues) that slow down the replication of the HIV virus. This can reduce the virus' ability to infect new cells. It may help lower the amount of HIV in your body (called "viral load") and raise your CD4 (T) cell count. Lamivudine plus zidovudine when used together can have stronger (synergistic) effects against the virus. COMBIVIR is a convenient way of taking lamivudine and zidovudine. COMBIVIR should usually be taken with other anti-HIV therapy.

Will COMBIVIR work the same as EPIVIR and RETROVIR taken together?

Taking one COMBIVIR Tablet twice a day is the same as taking one EPIVIR 150 mg Tablet twice a day and other two RETROVIR 100 mg Capsules three times a day or one RETROVIR 300 mg Tablet twice a day.

How should I take COMBIVIR?

Take COMBIVIR as your doctor prescribes it. The recommended dose is one COMBIVIR Tablet orally two times a day, with or without food. To help make sure you will benefit from COMBIVIR, you must not skip doses or take "drug holidays."

What should I do if I miss a dose of COMBIVIR?

If you miss a dose by more than 4 hours, wait and then take the next dose at the regularly scheduled time. However, if you miss a dose by less than 4 hours, take your missed dose immediately. Then take your next dose at the regularly scheduled time. Do not take more or less than your prescribed dose of COMBIVIR at any one time.

Does COMBIVIR cure HIV infection or AIDS?

No, there is not a cure for HIV infection or AIDS. People taking COMBIVIR may still develop infections or other illnesses associated with HIV. Because of this, it is very important to remain under the care of a healthcare provider. Use of lamivudine plus zidovudine has been shown to help patients with HIV infection stay healthy and live longer.

Does COMBIVIR reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

No, COMBIVIR, as well as other HIV medications, has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination.

Who should not take COMBIVIR?

You should not take COMBIVIR if you have had a serious allergic reaction to either lamivudine (also known as EPIVIR or 3TC) or zidovudine (also known as RETROVIR or ZDV). Do not take COMBIVIR at the same time as EPIVIR or RETROVIR, or TRIZIVIR® (zalcitabine/sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), because they also contain lamivudine and zidovudine. Individual dosing with EPIVIR plus RETROVIR, rather than COMBIVIR, should be considered for:

- A child under 12 years of age.
- Anyone who requires dosage adjustments due to drug side effects or poor kidney function.

If you are 65 years of age or over, consult your healthcare professional about the functioning of your liver, kidneys, and heart; about other illnesses you may suffer from, and about any other medications you may be taking. It is possible that the dosage may need to be modified.

What medical problems or conditions should I discuss with my healthcare provider?

- Talk to your healthcare provider if:
- You are pregnant or if you become pregnant while taking COMBIVIR. Ask your doctor about enrolling you in the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry, 1-800-258-4263.
 - You are breast-feeding. Mothers infected with HIV should not breast-feed their infants because HIV is present in breast milk.
- Also talk to your doctor about:
- Problems with your blood counts.
 - Problems with your muscles.
 - Problems with your kidneys.
 - Problems with your liver, especially if you have mild or moderate liver disease, such as hepatitis.

Can COMBIVIR be taken with other medications?

Yes, COMBIVIR can be taken with most other medications, including most anti-HIV drugs. Be sure to tell your doctor about all medications, over-the-counter or prescription, that you are taking.

What are the possible side effects of COMBIVIR?

Do not rely on this summary alone for information about side effects. Your healthcare provider can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects that may be relevant to you.

The safety of COMBIVIR is not expected to be different from the safety of EPIVIR and RETROVIR given separately.

In clinical studies of lamivudine plus zidovudine, side effects (occurring in 5% or more of patients included; muscle and joint pain, headache, muscle weakness and fatigue, nasal symptoms, cough, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting, neuropathy, trouble sleeping, fever or chills, loss of appetite, dizziness, abdominal pain or cramps, depression, skin rashes, and indigestion).

It's important to know that serious side effects can occur with COMBIVIR, such as a decrease in red and white blood cells and muscle damage. A buildup of lactic acid and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been reported with some HIV drugs, including nucleoside analogues.

For HIV-infected individuals, periodic blood tests are recommended. If certain changes occur in your laboratory results while you are taking COMBIVIR, particularly if you become anemic or if your white blood cell count falls too low, your medication may need to be adjusted, your doctor may prescribe EPIVIR plus RETROVIR separately in place of COMBIVIR.

Tell your doctor promptly about any side effects or other unusual symptoms you may experience. Although it may make you healthier, COMBIVIR does not cure HIV.

Safety Information

Make sure to see your doctor regularly, because serious side effects can occur, such as muscle damage and a decrease in red and white blood cells. A buildup of acid in the blood, and an enlarged liver, including fatal cases, have been seen. The most frequent side effects are headache, upset stomach, malaise or fatigue, and runny nose.

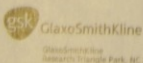
Other Information

This medication is prescribed for a particular condition. Do not use it for any other condition or give it to anybody else. Keep COMBIVIR and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Like most prescription drugs, lamivudine and zidovudine were required to be tested on animals before they were allowed for human use. In animal studies with doses much higher than those used in humans, zidovudine was associated with vaginal tumors. Your healthcare provider can tell you more about how drugs are tested on animals and what the results of these tests may mean about safety for you.

How should I store COMBIVIR Tablets?

COMBIVIR Tablets may be stored at room temperature and do not require refrigeration.



This provides a summary of information about COMBIVIR. If you have any questions or concerns about COMBIVIR or HIV, talk to your healthcare provider.

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PRISON PREVENTION
Condom Man!

I AM A SUPERHERO without superpowers. Faster than a speeding bullet? No—I'm more a man of rubber than of steel. My gift? Free condoms, which I distribute (5,000 since November 2001) to gay male inmates at Los Angeles County Jail. For these guys face an enemy more elusive and insidious than the Green Goblin.

If you're a man arrested in LA, and you choose to disclose that you are gay, you will be segregated (for your protection) into one of four barracks-style dormitories holding about 100 inmates each. C'mon in: It's damp, crowded, noisy and smelly. Sex definitely happens in here. You can tell by the two guys cuddling in the condom line or by those who sometimes get away with "tenting" their banks with a blanket for privacy.

You'd be wise, though, to assume that prisoners use condoms for protection against my foe, HIV. They don't, because sex is strictly prohibited in the jail nationwide. What's more, condoms could be used to strangle someone, jam a lock or be filled with bodily fluids and flung.

But Los Angeles' progressive sheriff, Leroy Baca, broke the mold and decided that the risk of HIV and STDs outweighed the rule against inmates having sex—and that condoms might provide better protection than the latex gloves and Corn Nuts bags prisoners were reduced to using. His staff approached my partner in crime-fighting, Mary Sylla, director of Correct HELP (Corrections HIV Education and Law Project), to, well, help. It made sense that they asked us, because we've long had a respectful working relationship with jail staff.

Sure, there are rubber rules: Don't take condoms out of the housing unit. Don't leave condoms on the floor or in laundry. Don't flush condoms down the toilet. And here's the clincher: Don't get caught having sex.

Ah, yes. You can have a glove, but it's a crime to use it. This is why the Sheriff's Department needs us to



pass out the condoms. We also have the lovely task of collecting the used items, placed by the inmates in a specially designed biohazard container. And no, we don't count them, but thanks for asking!

Each week, I swing into the jail to disperse my magic. The inmates queue up, get a dollop of HIV information—and a condom. Every now and then someone says, "I'm a slut. I'll need five!" Sorry, guys. For now, it's one per week.

Giving a lifesaving device to people who aren't allowed to use it? It is my blessing. It is my curse. But it feels great to walk into their dorm and hear them shout out my name. Who am I, you ask? I am Condom Man!

—Glenn Gaylord, Education Director, Correct HELP

Prisoners nationwide can contact Correct HELP: PO Box 46276, West Hollywood, CA 90046; or call the HIV Inmate Hotline collect (323.822.3838).

SHOW AND TELL

SUFFERING FOOLS

What's the silliest thing anyone's said to you about the virus? HIVers recall run-ins with some real April fools



"After I learned I was positive in '96, a co-worker said, 'I thought you were smarter than that!' For her insensitivity, I presented her with the Leona Helmsley/Dr. Laura Bitch Slap! Award."
 —Gregory Webber, Knoxville, Tennessee

sleeping with him, don't worry."
 —Nate Klarfeld, Wilton Manors, Florida



"When I told a friend I was positive, he said I had been cursed. I responded, 'Cursed because I have HIV, or because I have ignorant friends?'
 —Chad Conley, Vancouver, Canada



"A clerk in a pharmacy said, 'My new hair-dresser is a man, and I think he's gay. Aren't all gay men infected?' I looked her up and down and said, 'Honey, your hair looks great, and if you aren't



"I was starting to tell a friend about drug-resistance testing, and he said, 'They can test for that?' If



"A college student asked me, 'Can I get HIV from kissing a stripper's butt?'
 —River Huston, Upper Black Eddy, Pennsylvania



"A guy once asked if I could feel the HIV running around inside my body. No kidding! It amazes me sometimes how differently people view HIV from the many other chronic illnesses out there."
 —Josh Semerjian, Washington

—Josh Sparber and Kayeth Williams

NEWS
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 OP-ED



BRIEFS

• MILESTONES:

POZ congratulates two of our columnists on getting engaged (but not to each other): **River Huston** weds Duncan Mackenzie Dunn on June 28; **Shawn Decker** is to marry longtime honey **Gwen Barringer** in 2004, the UK. Coalition of People Living With HIV and AIDS awarded the also-married **Liza Minnelli** its first International Hero Award...**Gro Harlem Brundtland, MD**, will end her five-year term as WHO head in July. South Korea's TB expert **Jong-Wook Lee, MD**, will succeed her...17-year-old activist **Ineudira Barbosa** of Cambridge, Massachusetts, won the \$25,000 MTV- and LIFEbeat-sponsored Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes AIDS Scholarship...**Andrew Krutzich, 55**, a federal grant-giver who worked to improve HIV treatment in the U.S., died of AIDS January 2...**Tony winner, Gimme a Break!** star and AIDS advocate **Nell Carter** died January 23 of diabetes.
 —Suz Martin