HIV Balance

Created *21 Jul 2008 - 12:40pm*

Why the need for this campaign?

Phillip Keen explains the background to the development of the HIV Balance campaign and the stories in this issue of PL.

Since 1996, improvements in antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) have meant that most people with HIV in Australia have been leading much longer and healthier lives. In recent years, however, evidence has emerged that people taking ARVs can face increased risks of cardiovascular disease, diabetes [1][Diabetes mellitus] A disorder in which sugars in the diet cannot be metabolised into energy due to a lack of the enzyme insulin. Late-onset diabetes mellitus may be a long-term side effect of some anti-HIV drugs., and other conditions. These risks are related to some of the particular side effects of ARVs.

It is now clear that maximising health involves more than taking pills on time and proper monitoring. The risks of developing cardiovascular problems, diabetes and osteoarthritis can be significantly reduced by stopping smoking, maintaining good nutrition, and increasing exercise or activity. Managing alcohol and other drug use, and staying in control of mental health and stress levels are, as always, other important factors affecting wellbeing.

But changing lifestyles and old habits can be pretty challenging. Getting a new cookbook and gym membership are the easy bits. Everyone who sets out to live a healthier lifestyle will have setbacks along the way. Illness, motivation, lack of money, and many other things can become barriers. The temptation to cut loose and party hard with friends can be hard to resist. In the end, the process is about finding a way to balance our goals and strategies about healthier living with a liveable level of fun and indulgence.

In this special edition of *Positive Living*, six people with HIV have shared their stories with us about how they have incorporated healthier lifestyles into their routines, and how they have coped with setbacks. We also spoke to some service providers who specialise in areas like nutrition, exercise, and quitting smoking about their experience working with people with HIV, and the advice they have for people starting or maintaining a health program.

If you're considering making some changes in your lifestyle but feeling a bit daunted, then the good news is that just thinking about making a change is the first step. Once you start, you may be pleasantly surprised at the results; everyone we spoke to had been pleased by how much better they felt after even the smallest changes. Feeling good helped in staying motivated, or setting new goals.
There are loads of programs and resources available to help in working out where you might want to go in developing a healthier lifestyle, and to support you along the way. Some of these are listed at the end of the articles and some can be accessed through your local HIV organisation. We hope that there will be something in these stories that can help all our readers think about making a start towards better balancing HIV and lifestyle.

Editor's Note

"It all comes down to balance. I've made changes and adjustments but it certainly doesn't mean I've become this carrot-eating health freak who is anti-everything."

This quote from Scott's story in the following pages captures something of the honesty, humour and meaning of the HIV Balance campaign which we are including in this issue. This project, with materials prepared by the AFAO

So many of the health messages we receive from government agencies like "Quit Smoking", "Lose Weight" or "Exercise More" can seem a bit like lecturing and it can be easy to dismiss them as irrelevant or to put them in the "too-hard basket". As Scott implies, people who talk a lot about health can come across as "carrot-eating health freaks" but after putting his body to the test with heavy drinking, smoking and recreational drug use in the past, he decided that the toll on his health required some changes and adjustments. Not to give up everything and deny yourself some pleasures and indulgences but to keep things in a balanced perspective.

Information on the NAPWA website is provided subject to conditions of use that can be view at napwa.org.au. Visit the website for updated versions of this information.

The six people featured here give a range of approaches to looking after their physical and mental wellbeing. None of them has pretended that the process has been easy and they all acknowledge that having HIV can make their efforts that little bit harder – but managing the virus [3]A small infective organism which is incapable of reproducing outside a host cell. is an important motivation in the first place. Antiretrovirals may have done a lot to keep people alive but, with their side-effects and adherence requirements, they have not always improved people's quality of life as we might like.

Personally I felt a strong resonance with Steven's story as he outlined how he coped with surviving several AIDS-defining illnesses and then adjusting to an unexpected extra lease of life post the introduction of HAART [4] Highly Active AntiRetroviral Therapy ??? aggressive treatment of HIV infection using several different drugs together.. Each story though had a strong effect on me, giving me inspiration and some clues on how to get better balance in my own life. They are also beautifully told, with credit for this going to writer Bill O'Loughlin.

I hope you enjoy reading them and this special colour issue of *Positive Living*. Let us know if you like the look. It is not planned as a permanent change at this stage but all things are possible.

HIV BALANCE

- INTERVIEWS: Bill O'Loughlin
- ADDITIONAL RESEARCH AND WRITING: Paul Kidd
- PROJECT COORDINATOR: Phillip Keen, AFAO
- CONTRIBUTORS: Deanna, Jorge, Ron, Scott, Steven, Tobin, Jenny McDonald, Dr Caroline Warne, Ian Coutts, Ingrid Cullen and Gold's Gym
- PHOTOGRAPHY: Cameron Muir, Jamie Dunbar
- DESIGN: Stevie Bee

Copyright © 2008 AFAO NAPWA EDUCATION TEAM

Attachment	Size	Type
HIV Balance Poster - Deanna [5]	1.66 MB	PDF
HIV Balance Poster - Jorge [6]	1.81 MB	PDF
HIV Balance Poster - Ron [7]	1.47 MB	PDF
HIV Balance Poster - Scott [8]	1.56 MB	PDF
HIV Balance Poster - Steven [9]	1.58 MB	PDF
HIV Balance Poster - Tobin [10]	1.51 MB	PDF

- living with HIV
- Treating HIV

Links:
[1] http://napwa.org.au/glossary/term/95
[2] http://napwa.org.au/glossary/term/385
[3] http://napwa.org.au/glossary/term/125
[4] http://napwa.org.au/glossary/term/96
[5] http://napwa.org.au/files/deanna.pdf
[6] http://napwa.org.au/files/jorge.pdf
[7] http://napwa.org.au/files/Ron.pdf
[8] http://napwa.org.au/files/Scott.pdf
[9] http://napwa.org.au/files/Steven.pdf
[10] http://napwa.org.au/files/Tobin.pdf

Information on the NAPWA website is provided subject to conditions of use that can be view at napwa.org.au. Visit the website for updated versions of this information.

Information on the NAPWA website is provided subject to conditions of use that can be view at napwa.org.au. Visit the website for updated versions of this information.