

The WIHS Woman



The Connie Wofsy Women's HIV Study

Changes for Visit 25

By Claudia Ponath, Field Manager

At the time I am writing this article, it's the middle of August and I can't believe we're getting ready for the new visit. For me, that means submitting applications detailing the new changes to our institutional review boards. In a few weeks, we'll get the new versions of the questionnaires. And as we near the end of WIHS 3 (that is the 3rd five year funding cycle for the study), the WIHS investigators are preparing the application for WIHS 4, which we hope will provide us with another five years of funding.

What's new?

We are adding a few new questionnaires. One important questionnaire asks questions about your lifetime history of sexual and domestic abuse. All the other non-California WIHS sites have asked these questions at the first WIHS visit. We are adding them now. In future visits, we will ask you questions about your more recent experiences with sexual or domestic abuse. We realize that these are sensitive and

often difficult questions to answer. As always, you are free not to answer anything you choose. The reason the questions are being added is because being abused affects a woman's health and so having this information is important in evaluating the other information we collect from you. The WIHS field staff can answer any question you may have about this.

Other questionnaires being added for only this visit are about symptoms of menopause, sexual functioning (by special request from the WIHS community advisory board) and hair treatments for women from whom we collect hair.

What's changed?

The paper and pencil tasks won't be done this visit or the next and will only be done once every 18 months. We will ask you to do two other mental tasks: one is called the STROOP, and it involves color blocks and words printed in different colors. Some of you have already done this in the genetic study, and you won't have to do it again. The other one is called the

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Hopkins Verbal Learning Test.

Because this is an odd-numbered visit, we will ask only the short version of the mood questions.

What's back?

The Cardio-vascular study is starting up again this visit. That means we will be asking some participants to come for an ultrasound at the VA medical center in San Francisco. We will contact those of you who are eligible for this study after you come in for your core visit.

What's continuing?

We still want you to fast (not eat or drink anything, except water, for at least 8 hours) before your study appointment. The reason for this is to get a more accurate measure of key laboratory tests for things like cholesterol, lipids, and glucose. These blood tests are important markers for diseases that affect women, including diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension (high blood pressure). We will continue to ask those of you who are on HIV medications to give us small hair samples.

Many of our sub-studies are continuing through visit 25, including the PK study (or Pharmacokinetic study) that looks at HIV medication levels in the blood over a 12-24 hour period.

The Metabolic Study is continuing and involves testing for glucose, insulin, bone density (DEXA). During visit 25, women who first participated during visit 21 will be asked to come back in for a follow-up visit. Also, this is the last time that we'll be doing the follow up visits for the metabolic study, so we really hope to be able to see all of you who may have previously missed your follow-up visits. The Genetic Study is continuing and consists of a 45-minute

interview at the WIHS clinic of your choice. It also involves testing blood previously collected from you to find out the type of genes that may be related to mood, stress response and addictive diseases that you inherited from your mother and father. Many of you have already participated in this study and we thank you. If you have not yet participated in this genetic study, then you are eligible to participate during visit 25.

Abbreviated visits, for women who are unable to have a full core visit, will continue.

For women undergoing colposcopy, we will continue to ask if you want to donate tissue to the AIDS and Cancer Specimen Resource (ACSR). Women do not need to have cancer or HIV to enroll in this sub-study. Women who are eligible and wish to donate tissue to the bank will have an extra biopsy, oral rinse, and blood specimens collected for this study at the time of their colposcopy examination. We have had great response from you to this protocol and we thank you for your help!

What's gone?

The Sex Steroid Study – that's the one where you came in on day 2-4 of your period for just a blood draw – has been discontinued. Thank you to all the women who participated. The purpose of the study was to find out how close the WIHS participants were to menopause. We used to run 3 tests on the blood we drew from you on the first few days of your period. The WIHS investigators have now found a new blood test that can tell the same thing in one test from blood we take at your regular WIHS visit regardless of where you are in your cycle, so they decided to discontinue these additional visits. Look for more information about this in one of the next newsletters.

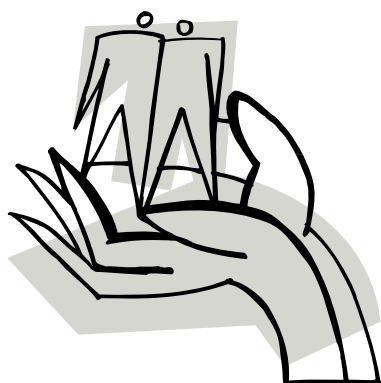
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The questionnaire on mental health care utilization has been discontinued – it was only going to be asked for two visits. The questionnaire you filled out yourself asking your opinions about health care is gone – it was a one-time thing.

In the series of questions about alcohol use, we'll still ask you the detailed questions about your current use, but we won't ask you again about your lifetime use if you were seen during visit 24.

In conclusion, the WIHS is a very important study, and we appreciate your continued dedication to and participation in the study. We know you have many commitments in your lives, so we are grateful for the time you make to come to study visits. We also appreciate your sharing your lives with us, and we will continue to make the study visits as pleasant as possible.



The Positive Partners HIV Superinfection Study

By Chris Boyd

The positive partners study is looking at whether new strains of HIV can be passed by sex between partners who are already HIV positive. We want to see if HIV Superinfection (infection with multiple strains of HIV) occurs, and if so how often and why.

Those who can participate in our HIV Superinfection Study include HIV positive men, women, and transgender persons, who are of 18 years or older, and who enroll with an HIV positive sex partner. Participants complete a phone interview to decide if they can be in the study. Each partner completes a confidential in person interview with a trained, nonjudgmental interviewer. Participants will also provide blood samples and men will be asked to provide a semen sample, if possible. After one year, participants return and repeat the process in an exit interview.

Participants receive \$40 for each visit, as well as free CD4, viral load, and drug resistance testing. Once enrolled in the study, for each additional couple you refer into the study, you will receive \$30 for each of those couples. If you are interested or know someone who might be, please call us at 1-415-734-4878, or e-mail us at positivepartners@gladstone.ucsf.edu For more information about HIV Superinfection please visit our website:

<http://www.gladstone.ucsf.edu/gladstone/site/pospart>



Update from the 16th International AIDS Conference

By Phyllis C. Tien, MD, MPH

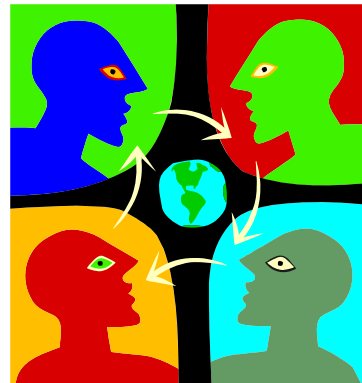
24,000 delegates participated this August in the AIDS Conference in Toronto, Canada - the largest number of delegates ever to attend an International AIDS conference. I also had the chance to attend this conference. It was a great feeling to be with so many people from all over the world committed to ending the AIDS epidemic and improve the lives of those with AIDS. One of the highlights for me was seeing the sincerity and commitment of Former President Bill Clinton and Bill Gates, Chair of the Gates Foundation when speaking about their work in helping people with AIDS. The Clinton Foundation has been working to reduce the cost of antiretroviral therapy and HIV testing in the developing world, particularly in Africa, while the Gates Foundation has supported new ways to prevent HIV including the use of microbicides in women and developing an AIDS vaccine.

Besides hearing from these two distinguished guests, it was great to see a number of presentations by WIHS investigators. Mardge Cohen, who is the PI from the Chicago WIHS site described her findings that WIHS women were more likely to die from injuries and accidents than men from the MACS, a cohort of men with and at risk for HIV.

I also had a chance to present findings from a hepatitis C infection study. We studied 1,174 HIV-infected men and women who were hepatitis C antibody negative. When we tested their blood for a hepatitis C viral load, we found that about 3% had detectable hepatitis C virus in their blood (which suggests chronic hepatitis C virus infection). Those having a history of injection drug use and either a CD4 count less

than 200 or abnormal liver function tests were most at risk for having a detectable hepatitis C viral load, even though they were hepatitis C antibody negative.

There were so many other topics covered at the conference from talks about the latest in HIV treatment and care to talks about how poverty, violence, and culture impacted on the AIDS epidemic. I will admit the conference left my head spinning a little bit, because it was so large. However, I came back home with a renewed energy about the work we are doing in the WIHS to understand HIV in women and a feeling of optimism having seen so many people from around the world committed to the fight against AIDS.



Butt Out

Cigarettes clog your lungs. Do they choke your HIV meds too?

*By CRISTI HEGRANES
POZ Magazine, August 2006*

When Ronni Gutierrez learned she was positive, in 1998, she added a drug for stress reduction: nicotine. "I've smoked about a pack a day since," says Gutierrez, 36, of San Francisco. On highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) for five years now, she thought she knew all of smoking's health risks. Now, a study in the June 2006 issue of the American Journal of Public Health suggests that some women who smoke may be undermining their combo therapy.

Earlier research had determined that smoking damages positive people's immune systems. After seven years of studying 924 positive women in six U.S. cities, Women's Interagency HIV Study (WIHS) lead investigator Joseph Feldman, PhD, of SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, says smokers on treatment had higher viral loads and worse immune responses than nonsmokers. "Smokers were 53% more likely to die while on HAART," Feldman says (though from non-AIDS-related causes).

Smokers were 36% more likely to contract AIDS-related diseases while taking HAART, but researchers found no commonalities among those diseases. "It wasn't just respiratory problems and cancers like you would expect," says Monica Gandhi, MD, a study investigator from the University of California at San Francisco.

The worse outcomes can't be chalked up to poor med adherence: Even smokers who didn't skip doses were more likely to have low CD4 counts. Researchers say their results could be

muddled if the women smoked more when they were already sick, thinking, "I'm ill anyway."

Says Feldman, "Physicians need to caution women that smoking while on HAART could have serious consequences on treatment and overall longevity."

Gutierrez defends her habit, calling HIV research confusing. "I never know what to believe," she says. "I've been healthy so far, so I'm not quitting yet." Even if it does send her CD4 cells up in smoke.



Pretzel Salad



By Jack Whiteford
UCSF WIHS Grant Administrator

Did your Mother have a favorite recipe that she liked to showcase at family picnics and get-togethers? My Mom did, and I have to admit, it's somehow magical. It tastes amazing with a variety of flavors that compete for your attention. Even the name gets your attention: Pretzel Salad. It's a gelatin salad with a pretzel crust. Though it is a very simple recipe that my Mother found in a Seattle Buddhist Church cookbook, by the way it is served with such reverence you would think that it has been in the family for generations. I would like to share this recipe with you here and encourage you to try it and see if you can taste the magic of a Mother's Love.

The first layer of the salad is the crust. Start by preheating the oven to 400 degrees. In a 9 by 13 inch glass dish (the glass lets you see all the layers!), mix 3 cups of coarsely crushed pretzels, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup melted butter and 1-tablespoon sugar. Spread the mixture evenly to make the first layer in the dish, ensuring that it is consistently wet from all the butter. Bake for only 8 minutes. Your home will be filled with the aroma of hot buttered popcorn! Remove the hot dish from the oven with care and allow it to cool. Texture is very important, and toasting the crust gives it a nuttiness that is the real foundation of the dish, giving it depth while supporting the other textures and flavors. One bite is like a comforting and loving mother's hug.

The second layer of the salad is the creamy filling. While the crust is cooling, soften a package of cream cheese in the microwave, place in a mixing bowl, then add 1-cup of sugar. Mash the sugar and cream cheese together until it be-

comes smooth, with the sugar completely incorporated into the cream cheese. Next, fold in a container of cool whip, which will really lighten the mixture, making it fluffy and full. Spread the filling evenly over the crust, remembering to lick the spoon! While the crust gives the dish depth, this creamy layer gives the dish an expansive richness and fullness that is very satisfying and comforting, just like mother's milk.

Finally, we have the berry topping. While the crust and the filling give depth and expansiveness, the topping will overwhelm the taste buds with bursts of flavors that will make them soar like rockets to heaven. The fruit is actually healthy! Even your mother would approve of this delightful indulgence – mine does! In a mixing bowl, add 3 cups of boiling water to 2 large packages of raspberry gelatin. I recommend raspberry though other flavors work well, too. Stir the mixture until the gelatin is dissolved then add 3 bags of frozen mixed berries. Continue to stir until the mixture begins to gel. It is amazing how quickly this happens! Spread the topping over the other layers, ensuring an even distribution. This is now ready to eat, though it is best served chilled.

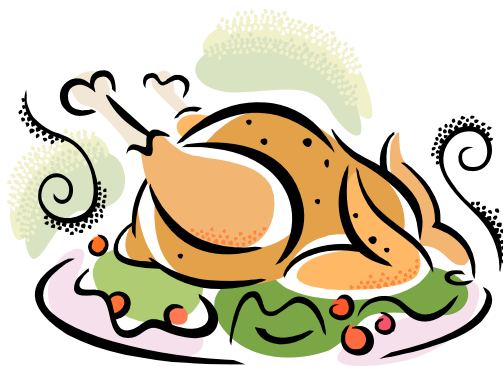


I hope you try this recipe. Even though it is quite simple, it has an amazing impact that far exceeds its modest ingredients. The crust, filling and topping, as I have described, combine to create a wall of flavor – a tidal wave – that washes over you, letting you only say “Wow!”

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I am grateful to my mother for finding this recipe and for such wonderful memories in how she has shared it over the years. I now get to share it with you! My mother is nearly 80 years old and is losing her memory to Alzheimer's. I cherish the memories that I have of her. So, when it comes to pretzel salad, I would gladly say, "Thank you, Mom, that was delicious. Can I have some more, please?"



Women's Immunity Study

HIV Negative



You can help us determine how your monthly cycle and how contraceptive gels affect immune cells in your uterus and cervix.

We are recruiting for participation in a clinical study women who:

- ✿ Are 18 years of age or older
- ✿ Have regular menstrual periods
- ✿ Are HIV negative
- ✿ Are not using birth control or hormones

Study participants will:

- ✿ Come to 4 visits at Mt. Zion Hospital (part of UCSF)
- ✿ Be reimbursed with up to \$150 for their time and effort

If you are interested or you have questions about this study, please contact **Portia Daniels** at **415-885-7675**

Women's Immunity Study

HIV Positive



We're studying how the menstrual cycle affects the immune cells of the uterus and cervix in HIV+ women.

If you are 18-40, HIV+, have regular menstrual periods and are not using birth control or hormones, you may be eligible to participate.

The study involves 3 visits at UCSF, Mt. Zion Hospital. Participants will be reimbursed \$140.00 for participation.

**Please contact Becky Packard at
415-353-7899**

**Veterans Affairs Medical Center
University of California
San Francisco
UCSF**

**Men Living with HIV and Hepatitis C
Needed**

**For a study on new ways to look at
liver damage and how changes in the
liver may affect blood sugar**

Criteria

- Men between the ages of 30 and 70
- Active HCV infection (detectable HCV viral load)
- Have never been on HCV therapy
- Have never been told that you have cirrhosis

You will be **reimbursed** up to **\$175** for your time & effort. Your travel expenses will also be covered.

**For More Information
Contact Jane (415) 353-9767
OR
Toll Free (866) 476-5109**



If you're HIV + you can help answer questions about HIV Superinfection. The Positive Partners Study is seeking HIV + sex partners. You must enroll with an HIV + partner.

As a participant you will

- **Receive \$40 each visit**
- **Receive free CD4 , viral load and drug resistance tests**
- **Come for two visits**
- **About an hour and a half per visit**
- **Call 1-415-734-4878**

All inquiries and participant information are kept strictly confidential.
<http://www.gladstone.ucsf.edu/gladstone/site/pospart/>
positivepartners@gladstone.ucsf.edu



WIHS Luncheon!

**When: Friday, October 27
12:30 p.m.**
**Where: Highland Hospital
1411 East 31st St.
Wing C-2, Oakland**



Join Us For A Free Lunch and Win Raffle Prizes!

- ♦ **Meet other WIHS women**
- ♦ **Talk with Dr. Claire Borkert, Program Director EBAC WIHS Site**
- ♦ **Learn about Health Maintenance and Disease Prevention**
- ♦ **Bring any questions or concerns you have about the study**

****Please RSVP to Heneliaka 415-502-6284****

Getting There: AC Transit Bus Routes **62, 57, 58, and 11**. Call AC Transit at (510) 817-1717 for updated schedule. Take BART to the **Fruitvale Station** and transfer to bus route **62** or take BART to the **Lake Merritt Station** and transfer to bus route **62**. Call BART at (510) 465-2278 for updated schedule.