

# *The WIHS Woman*



## **The Connie Wofsy Women's HIV Study**

### **A Thank You Letter to WIHS Participants from Dr. Fauci at the NIH**

By Nancy Hessel

Enclosed in this issue of the WIHS Woman Newsletter is a thoughtful letter from Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), thanking all of the women in the WIHS for their participation in this valuable research study. This letter acknowledges a milestone for the WIHS, a ten-year anniversary, and recognizes the unique contribution that the WIHS women make to scientific research and to our community advisory boards.



Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, a native of Brooklyn, New York, received his M.D. degree from Cornell University Medical College and then completed an internship and residency at The New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center. In 1968, Dr.

Fauci came to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as a clinical associate in the Laboratory of Clinical Investigation (LCI) at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). In 1984, Dr. Fauci became Director of NIAID, where he oversees an extensive research portfolio of basic and applied research to prevent, diagnose, and treat infectious and immune-mediated illnesses, including HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, illness from potential agents of bioterrorism, tuberculosis, malaria, autoimmune disorders, asthma and allergies. The proposed budget for NIAID for fiscal year 2005 is approximately \$4.4 billion. Dr. Fauci serves as one of the key advisors to the White House and Department of Health and Human Services on global AIDS issues, and on initiatives to bolster medical and public health preparedness against possible future bioterrorist attacks.

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

A Thank You Letter to WIHS Participants from Dr. Fauci at the NIH .....	page 1
Ten Years with the WIHS - A Reflection from Sheila Bryant .....	page 2
Take Care of Your Health for 2005 .....	Page 2
CAB Corner .....	page 3
Jack Whiteford - New Senior Research Services Analyst .....	page 4

## Ten Years with the WIHS A Reflection from Sheila Bryant

I am a 41-year old African American recovering addict living with HIV/AIDS, not knowing until this day how I contracted this disease. I could have been infected through unprotected sex, because in addition to being an IV drug user, I was also prostituting my body. When I was told that I was HIV-positive in 1994, I thought I was going to die in a month. Well, I felt like dying back then. This feeling I wouldn't wish upon my worst enemies. But by attending the WIHS research study, I learned how to live with HIV/AIDS and not die from it. Each and every 6 months I attend the WIHS faithfully. This is my 21<sup>st</sup> visit in 10 years in which I have become very educated about HIV/AIDS. They also have so many sub-studies that have helped me to understand more about my entire body. Participating in the oral study helped me to learn more about my oral hygiene. Other studies, like the metabolic study, have alerted me to important health conditions that needed to be addressed. Because I found out about my osteoporosis through the metabolic study, I was able to start the necessary treatment.

The doctors and nurses on the staff are also very supportive. For them, the WIHS is not just a job; they genuinely care about us. I try to do my part by coming to my WIHS visits on time and being truthful about what is working and what is not working. This is important, since we're all working as a team to learn more about HIV/AIDS. I am so thankful for the support that I have received from my family and the WIHS staff at Highland Hospital in Oakland. Their encouragement has inspired me to continue learning all there is to know about HIV/AIDS. It is important to stay updated, since the statistics are always changing and new discoveries are constantly occurring. Until there is a

cure, let us "Each one, teach one." Learn all there is to know about your health and body. I have taken my life and community for granted for so long, and it is time for me to give back by volunteering my time. Through the support of the WIHS staff and my determination to live a positive life, I have become a peer educator, a peer mentor, and an NCAB representative who sits on the Task Force Committee. I also starred in an HIV/AIDS documentary, *Reflections Unseen*, produced by the East Bay Perinatal Council and filmmaker Aarin Burch.

I have HIV; it doesn't have me. So get tested, especially if you are having any kind of unprotected sex and/or are using IV drugs. Let's stay safe. Peace to you all in the new year. Let's each one, teach one. That is my motto. My living with HIV will not be in vain. Peace be to you all! - **Sheila**



## Take Care of Your Health for 2005

Since it is a new year and some of us try to make New Year's Resolutions, how about trying to improve your health. Here are a few tips that you may want to try.

1. Be a happy person. Anger and hostility are not good for your heart. Be with the people you love - family and friends.
2. Have some quiet time each day for yourself. A one hour nap, read a book, watch a movie, knit, sew, or whatever makes you relax.
3. Exercise - take a walk, ride a bike, go swimming, join a gym. If you need some inspiration for exercise, call some friends to go for a walk or take an exercise class together.
4. Improve your diet. Eat more vegetables, cut out the sweets and junk food. Watch your calorie intake. Reduce the amount of fat you take in.

Have a Happy and Healthy New Year!

## CAB CORNER



### Hello Ladies,

As your NCAB Representative for the Bay Area, I attended the NCAB Meeting on November 7<sup>th</sup> in downtown San Francisco which was followed by the Executive Committee Meeting that ran from November 8<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup>.

At the NCAB meeting, I met with other NCAB representatives from other WIHS sites across the country to discuss the latest happenings in the WIHS study. Most notably, we recognized how the WIHS study just completed its tenth year of research, thanks to the wonderful WIHS women who have volunteered their time to increasing our knowledge about HIV and AIDS in women. We also offered dedications to NCAB members who have passed away. As we do at every NCAB meeting, we discussed the WIHS mission statement and by-laws and decided what the topics would be for our upcoming monthly conference calls. We also chose the April 2005 National HIV/AIDS Update Conference, sponsored by The American Foundation for AIDS Research Conference, to be our NCAB conference of choice this year. Every year, we choose a conference to attend which will help us to stay informed about current issues surrounding HIV/AIDS and women. This year it will be held close to home in Oakland. Finally, after reflecting on the last ten years in WIHS, we talked about any changes we would like to see in the study and what our priorities should be as we embark on the 11<sup>th</sup> year of WIHS.

In the afternoon, we had two wonderful women, Moher Downing and Barbara Garcia, graciously offer their time to facilitate a workshop on "12 Steps To a Good Meeting." We

discussed the importance of setting ground rules and keeping a close watch on time. We also had the opportunity to apply the learned strategies through role plays. After all the hard work, we were able to unwind with head and neck massages from two wonderful massage therapists, thanks to Nancy Hessol!

The Executive Committee Meeting included presentations from researchers in both the WIHS and another study called the MACS (Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study). I found them to be very informative. In particular, Dr. Phyllis Tien's discussion on how HIV medicines may affect fat distribution in women was especially interesting and was also the topic of a recent issue of POZ magazine.

I would like to give praise to each and every person involved in this study. I would especially like to thank Debra Walters, Julia Thomas, and Alana Kane for inspiring me to continue to learn all there is to know about HIV and to share this information with my family, friends, and community. I give all praises to my Higher Power, which is God in my life today. I really hope and pray the funding for the WIHS studies continues. I want to live a very long and meaningful life and have very important work to do in and out of my community with God's blessings. Peace to you all! I made it another year. Praise God! Amen. - Sheila



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Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Jack Whiteford and I am very excited to be the new Research Services Analyst for the WIHS program here at UCSF. My background includes work as a Contract Manager for the Immune Tolerance Network at UCSF, six years of sailing on cargo ships to Alaska as a deck-hand then as a mate, and also three years working as a Vocational Specialist for developmentally disabled adults. I am originally from Seattle and have been in San Francisco for the past eight years. I enjoy bicycling to work, hiking and camping in the great outdoors and dancing, among many interests. One passion that I would like to share is the art of spinning fire or flags, which is my way of connecting with the Universe. As you can see from this recent picture taken of me flagging on the beach at sunset, it is a lot of fun!



## For the Love of Cats

