

The WIHS Woman



The Connie Wofsy Women's HIV Study

Report on the United States Conference on AIDS

By: Barbara Garcia, CAB member

Due to a last minute cancellation by another CAB member, I was invited to attend the United States Conference on AIDS. The conference was held on October 29-31, 2009 at the San Francisco Union Square Hilton and was sponsored by the National AIDS Minority Council. It has been a long time since I last attended an AIDS event and attending was tiring and confusing and I totally enjoyed it! I recommend that women get involved in AIDS activism. For me just the experience of getting out and being around a big group of people was exciting, and figuring out how to navigate the four towers of the Hilton was an adventure.

Opening Plenary Luncheon:

TRANSGENDER PEOPLE AND HIV: OUR TIME HAS COME!

This was a wonderful session which was moderated by Cecilia Chung and included a panel

of four MTF (male to female) women and a FTM (female to male). It reminded me of the late 80's when it was rare to hear women talking about being positive. Their time has definitely come! This was a reminder of what it was like being an unheard minority. This was the first time I heard people speak of poverty and lack of housing as the biggest crime against HIV positive people. Our President Barack Obama's name was mentioned three times and every time there was applause. Already the travel ban for people with HIV entering the U.S. has been lifted and there is a small group of Washington D.C. officials touring the country to hear from people with HIV and what the people with HIV need! The session ended with singing by the Transgender Gospel Choir. It was very inspirational and a great start to the day.

In the closing plenary a talk was about the limited success an AIDS vaccine trial had in India. The speaker compared it to a wall with no steps now having a first step.

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AIDS IN THE EAST BAY

In the afternoon I went to a session about services in the East Bay moderated by Gloria Lockett. There are services for people with HIV but those that rely on state funding are being eliminated or cut back. In addition, organizations that depend on private support from individuals are receiving smaller donations. Also poverty and lack of housing are reasons that people don't get services that they need.

It is always hard to hear the numbers in this epidemic. In the East Bay, people under 30 years old make up 34% of new infections! Among African American men who have sex with men 46% have HIV.

There was recognition of a great loss to the community: the death of Dr. Robert Scott. I did not know him but I have heard what an amazing physician he was and what wonderful work he did in his clinics in Oakland and Zimbabwe. It reminds me that we need to remember to honor and support all the wonderful caregivers who have supported us throughout the epidemic. At every workshop I attended, there were panels of caring and smart people who work in this epidemic. We know some of them from our experience in the WIHS

TOTAL HEALTH AND HIV

This session was so full of information I really needed better skills at note taking. Three doctors with HIV practices were on the panel. They spoke about people with HIV who do not have symptoms, reactions to menopause in some HIV positive women and the long term effects of the HIV medications on our overall health. We need to ask our medical care providers these questions and any other questions we might have. Remember that our participation in the WIHS is also helping to answer

these questions.

They all pointed out that we are individuals and may have unique symptoms or reactions. We may react differently than people without HIV.

PRISON WORKSHOP

I went to a session that described a research study with couples where the man has recently been released from prison. It sounded very interesting and the staff were very nice.

PEOPLE WITH AIDS (PWA) LOUNGE

On both Friday and Saturday I visited the PWA lounge. It was a spacious suite with nourishing refreshments. It had two bedrooms for people who needed to take a nap. There was a nurse and doctor on call. It was staffed by volunteers from the HIV community. I had a chance to visit with a very nice woman from Ohio. It was nice to meet a woman with HIV and immediately have a bond.

Most conferences have a place for people with HIV/AIDS to take a break. Conferences are very intense and there are a lot of exhibits and interesting sessions. It's both wonderful and tiring. This time the conference depended on donations to pay for the PWA suite and the refreshments. Thanks to Walgreens, Mom's Pharmacy and the Hilton Hotel for their generosity.



Vitamin D and Your Health

By: Phyllis C. Tien, MD

Vitamin D deficiency has been linked to many types of health problems and is widespread among women. Vitamin D deficiency is of increasing concern in HIV and could worsen the course of HIV. Because of this, in the coming year, WIHS will begin to study Vitamin D levels in blood collected from earlier WIHS visits. The sections below answer some commonly asked questions about Vitamin D.

How common is Vitamin D deficiency?

A large survey found that over 70 percent of women ages 51-70 are not getting enough vitamin D. Studies in HIV-infected patients (including WIHS women) show that low levels of vitamin D occur in 75% to 92% of patients.

What's so important about Vitamin D?

Vitamin D is known to play an important role in bone health. Vitamin D allows the body to absorb and keep calcium in the body, which is important for building strong and healthy bones.

What are the harmful effects of Vitamin D deficiency?

Vitamin D deficiency has often been linked to osteoporosis or thinning of the bones. Recently, other research has shown that vitamin D deficiency may increase the risk of some cancers, as well as heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and diabetes. It may also affect how well the immune system works and has been associated with inflammation. Others have shown that Vitamin D deficiency in young women increased the risk of hypertension later in life and yet, another study found that Vitamin D deficiency may be linked with depression and pre-menstrual syndrome.

How can I increase the amount of Vitamin D I get in my body?

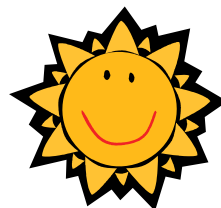
Sunlight is a readily-available, free source of vitamin D (especially for people in California, where we get year-round sunshine), because vitamin D is made in our skin. When UV light from the sun's ray enters our skin, it causes a chemical reaction that leads to the making of vitamin D. So, exposing 25 percent of the skin's surface area to 10 minutes of sunlight three days per week can keep levels at normal levels for most people; however, people with darkly-pigmented skin need more.

Some (but not many) foods contain vitamin D naturally, such as fatty fish; other sources are dietary supplements and vitamin-D-fortified foods, such as milk and orange juice.

Right now, it is unclear how much vitamin D one should take to bring the levels of vitamin D up. The recommended guidelines for taking vitamin D supplements are 200 IU for people age 50 and younger and 400 IU for people 51 to 70 years old. However, many experts feel that this is not enough, and some recommend that women over 50 should take about 800-1,000 IU of Vitamin D per day.

How can I find out if I am low on Vitamin D?

A blood test can be done to determine the level of Vitamin D in your body. The blood test measures the amount of 25-hydroxyvitamin D [or 25(OH)D] (which is a form of vitamin D) that is in your blood. Serum 25(OH)D is tested, because it is a better measure of the amount of vitamin D stored in your blood.



CAB CORNER



Holiday Party 2009

By: Heneliaka jones

The Women's Study held its annual holiday luncheon on Friday, December 4, 2009 at Lake Merritt United Methodist Church in Oakland. A wonderful Turkey dinner was served which included all of the holiday favorites. As always, the highlight of the afternoon was the door prize raffle. We gave out gift baskets, gift certificates, and Sephora cosmetic cases. Additionally, every study participant received a hand bag with extra gifts and trinkets inside. Children were also given toys to take home. All in all, it was a wonderful way to end the year.

On behalf of the WIHS staff we would like to thank each of you for your time and dedication. Have a happy Holiday Season and a Happy New Year!

The Flu, Study Visits, Kids and You

In order to protect all patients at UCSF from getting the flu, the UCSF medical center has some new rules for the duration of the flu season:

- Visitors under the age of 16 are not allowed on patient care floors, only in the cafes and main lobbies at the Parnassus and Mount Zion Campus. We regret that for the time being this means that you should not bring your child with you to your WIHS study visit.
- If you have no other child care options, please discuss this with the WIHS staff.

- If you have the flu, please postpone your study visit until you are well.
- If you come to a study visit with flu like symptoms, like coughing and sneezing, we may ask you to wear a mask.

Please understand that these rules are made to protect everybody, most of all our patients.

We do look forward to seeing you at your next WIHS visit.



Achoo!! The Flu? Simple answers to common questions about the flu



*By: Edward L. Machtinger, MD
Director, Women's HIV Program at UCSF*

I am sure that you have been hearing A LOT about the flu this season. Mostly, this is because there is a new type of the flu this year that has been affecting people all around the world. This new type is known as H1N1, or the "swine flu". The more typical type of flu, "seasonal flu" is here this year too.

Both types of the flu are viruses called influenza "A". You can get both types of flu by breathing little droplets that people with the flu cough or sneeze out into the air. You may also get infected by touching something that someone with the flu recently touched and then touching your nose or mouth. The swine flu probably came from the unnatural way that pigs are raised on factory farms. However, you can't get the swine flu from eating pork.

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Almost all of my patients are concerned about the flu and have been asking me questions about it. Below, are the some of the most common questions that I have been asked and simple answers to them.

How can I tell the difference between the flu and a common cold?

A lot of people describe any illness that causes a runny nose, cough, or sore throat as “the flu”. However, unlike your average cold, the flu is often much more severe and usually comes with fever, headaches, body aches, and exhaustion. Most people can keep going with a regular cold; the flu tends to really knock you down. If the diagnosis is confusing, your doctor can easily test you for the flu by sending a small sample of the fluid in your nose to the lab.

Is the flu more dangerous for HIV+ women?

Yes. Most people, including HIV+ women, get better from the flu after 1- 2 weeks without any medical treatment. However, the flu can be much more severe and even life-threatening for people with chronic illnesses, such as HIV, heart or lung problems, obesity, or diabetes; in people older than 65; and in women who are pregnant or recently delivered. If you fit into one or more of these categories, you need (and are entitled to) both types of flu vaccine.

Should I get the vaccines for both types of flu?

If you have a chronic illness such as HIV or any of the conditions listed in the prior answer, you should definitely get both types of flu vaccine. Healthy people under 65 generally

don't need the vaccines because the flu is less dangerous to them. The vaccines take 2 weeks for protection to develop. They help prevent getting the flu and, if you do get it, the vaccines reduce the chances of having serious complications.

The only people who can't get the vaccines are those who are severely allergic to eggs or who have had Guillain-Barre syndrome after receiving a flu vaccine in the past. There is a small risk that you will feel a little sick from the vaccine (nowhere near as sick as the flu) and no chance that you will get the flu for receiving the vaccine.

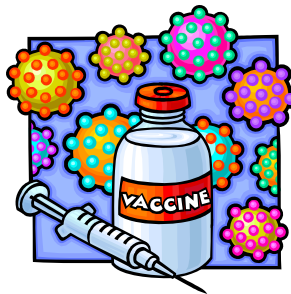
Can I use the nasal mist type of vaccines instead of the shot?

HIV+ women CANNOT use nasal mist vaccines because they contain a weakened form of the live influenza virus. This is dangerous to people with HIV. The mist is also not recommended for HIV-negative women who have other chronic illnesses or who are over 50. This means that, for most people, the mist will not be the vaccine to get.

What should I do if I have the flu?

If you think that you may have the flu, tell your doctor AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. There are medicines that you can take to help you get better faster and avoid flu-related complications, but they need be started within 48-hours after you get sick to be maximally effective. Usually, the medicines are only recommended for people with chronic illnesses like HIV that place them at risk for becoming seriously ill from the flu.

Also, I have seen a number of women



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come to clinic with a bad cough after having the flu that turned out to be a serious bacterial pneumonia. The flu makes it easier for other infections to develop. Thus, it is important to keep your doctor informed about how you are feeling when you first get sick and over the course of your illness.



Is there anything else I can do to prevent getting the flu?

If you have been, or know you will be, in contact with someone diagnosed with the flu, such as someone you live with, there are medicines you can take for 7 days to help prevent getting the flu. The medicines help prevent getting the flu whether you have received the vaccination or not. Tell your doctor about your situation and together you will decide if you need these pills.

You can also prevent getting the flu by avoiding contact with sick people during flu season and by washing your hands frequently after you touch things in public.

Are you HIV+ and Over 60? Keep an Eye on Your Memory!

THE MEMORY AND AGING CENTER, UCSF, is currently offering free neurologic and cognitive assessments for eligible study participants.

To qualify for the study, you must meet these requirements:

- ✓ HIV +
 - ✓ 60 or more years old
 - ✓ Have never had a brain infection
 - ✓ No active drug use
- (Other exclusions apply—Call for a free screening!!)

**You will be paid \$50 for each completed visit.
(2 visits in year 1)!**

***Please call (415) 476-5485
Email: InsulinStudy@memory.ucsf.edu***

Got Depo?



You can help researchers at UCSF with an important study about how Depo-Provera, the birth control shot, affects immune cells in the uterus and cervix.



You may be eligible if:

- You are HIV negative
- You are 18-44 years old
- You have regular menstrual cycles
- You are about to start using Depo-Provera

Participants will have 6 visits at Mt. Zion Hospital and will be reimbursed up to \$240 in cash plus gift cards and transportation reimbursement.

Please call Jane at 415-353-9767 or toll free 866-476-5109



Female Volunteers Needed!

You can help UCSF researchers learn about how menopause affects immune cells in the cervix.



You may be eligible if:

- You are generally healthy (HIV negative or positive)
- You are age 18-40 and have regular periods

OR

- You are at least 50 and have not had a period for at least a year

Study participants will have 2 or 3 visits at Mount Zion and will be reimbursed up to \$70, plus transportation.

Please call Jane for more information: 415-353-9767 or toll free 1-866-476-5109

Thinking about Mirena?



You can help UCSF researchers learn how the Mirena IUD affects immune cells in the uterus & cervix.

You may be eligible if:

- ✿ You are 18-44 years old*
- ✿ You are HIV negative and generally healthy*
- ✿ You have regular periods*
- ✿ You & your doctor have decided that Mirena is right for you*

Participants will have six visits at Mount Zion Hospital and will be reimbursed up to \$240 cash plus gift cards and transportation costs.

*Please call Jane at 415-353-9767
or toll free at 866-476-5109.*

CONTRACEPTIVE GEL STUDY



You can help us learn about how birth control gels affect immune cells in your uterus and cervix.

You may be eligible if you:

- ✿ are 18 to 44 years old and have regular menstrual periods*
- ✿ are HIV negative and generally healthy*
- ✿ are not using an IUD, contraceptive gels or birth control pills*
- ✿ are willing to use two different vaginal gels, each for about 10-14 days*

Study participants will:

- ✿ be helping in the fight against HIV in women!*
- ✿ come to six visits at Mt. Zion Hospital (part of UCSF)*
- ✿ be reimbursed up to **\$240** in cash, plus transportation and a \$25 gift card*

*If you are interested, please call Jane
at 415-353-9767 or toll free at 866-476-5109*