

# POSITIVE VOICES - November 2012

*Your Newsletter by Positive People for Positive People*

## **Save the date / Reserve your seat !**

S.T.A.P.'s Annual Thanksgiving Dinner will be on November 13<sup>th</sup> at Trinity Memorial Church (across from Binghamton High School). I would hope that by the time you are reading this you have already notified Candace of your desire to attend. If not - now is the time to reserve your seat, don't want to go alone ? - call a fellow member of our "club" and both of you make it out for an evening of fellowship.

## **Here it comes.**

It is that time of the year again, days get shorter and nights get longer.... And cooler to colder. For some of us that in itself is enough to start us getting down about the whole "holiday season" approaching. It is the time of the year where we must stay ahead of the usual "seasonal depression". Think about it - If I/You are feeling lonely, bummed - out, sad to depressed; one of your friends is feeling worse than you & most likely their problems are more than yours.

We have all had that bad day when out of the blue a friend will "check - in" on us and that moment of "care" that we feel can be so helpful. Down with a cold and a friend will do some food shopping for you - you get my point. Be open to that kind of help when your friends feel the need to offer - sometimes we don't even realize we may need help (pride can get in the way). The help you accept in turn helps the giver.

There is also the pro-active approach while you're the one who still has their shit together. Being that "giver" has many rewards unto itself. Doing what ever you can is always helpful to the person getting the favor, even if it is just an ear to hear their problems. If you can do more for our community & friends; then you already understand the benefits you earn for your efforts. That being said, we need to keep in mind our brothers & sisters of this "club" at this time of the year. Step up and do something to make yourself proud. And a simple first step can be to "just get involved".

Anyway you look at it things are changing all around us. Just the changes to our health care and other forms of assistance we are now forced to depend upon. If we come together to help each other - we will work our way though this too. I know it's one of those saying but .... "You can ride the bus or you could drive the bus" - I choose to drive the bus. The good news! We all get our own bus - you choose too. \*the important part is that you get on the bus.

## Crucial discovery on HIV

Oct 23, 2012 | KATHARINE CHILD (times live.co.za from South Africa)

South African researchers have discovered how the human body makes antibodies that can kill 88% of the viruses that cause AIDS.

### **“Infected people give clues to making a vaccine”**

Announcing the "huge advance", scientists said yesterday that the "broadly neutralising antibodies" fight more than one strain of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

It is hoped that the knowledge of how the body produces these powerful antibodies can be used to develop a vaccine that would mimic the virus and stimulate the body into making the same antibodies.

The director of the Centre for the AIDS Program "Broadly neutralising me" of Research in Southern Africa, Professor Salim Abdool Karim, said: antibodies are considered to be the key to making an Aids vaccine."

One of the leaders of the study, National Institute for Communicable Diseases professor Lynn Morris, said the research findings were a "major scientific advance. Infected people give us the clues on how to make a vaccine".

But she cautioned that a vaccine was still "years away".

The research was led by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases and included scientists from Caprisa, and the universities of KwaZulu-Natal and Cape Town, and Wits, in conjunction with Harvard University and the University of North Carolina.

They conducted long-term research on two HIV-positive women in KwaZulu-Natal whose bodies naturally produced the "super" antibodies.

The co-leader of the study, Dr Penny Moore, said researchers looked at the "cat-and-mouse game" being played out between the body and the virus.

They found that the virus developed a protective sugar coating when fighting the body's antibodies, but a certain type of sugar, position 332, developed a vulnerability in the virus that prompted the body to make the powerful antibodies.

Karim said one of the women in the study had since died from TB "but her legacy lives on. The other is a 43-year-old who is doing very well. She is on antiretrovirals and has a long-term partner and her viral load is undetectable."

Moore said the next step was to find evidence in similar studies around the world.

Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi praised the scientists, calling their discovery "a great day for South Africa". He urged people not to expect a vaccine immediately.

"People still need to test for HIV once a year and use condoms."

## **Cognitive Training Exercises Help Older HIV-Positive People**

[www.positivelyaware.com](http://www.positivelyaware.com)      *November/December 2012*

A new study by researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), published online Oct. 15, 2012 in the *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*, shows that cognitive training exercises can help to improve mental processing speed and the ability to complete daily tasks in middle-age and older adults with HIV.

"Today, more than 25% of people living with HIV in the United States are older than 50," says the study's lead author, David Vance, PhD, associate professor in the UAB School of Nursing, associate director of the UAB Center for Nursing Research and scientist in the UAB Edward R. Roybal Center for Research on Applied Gerontology. "Thirty to 60% of adults living with HIV experience cognitive problems at some point in the illness, a condition known as 'HIV-associated neurocognitive disorders' [HAND]. It's imperative that people with HIV and their treatment teams be proactive in addressing cognitive problems as they emerge, because without treatment these issues—which mimic premature aging—can lead to difficulties in working and living independently."

According to a [report in Science Daily](#), in the pilot study conducted at UAB, 46 middle-age and older adults with HIV were randomly assigned to 10 hours of computerized speed-of-processing training or to no cognitive training. "Speed of processing" refers to how quickly a person can automatically perform simple tasks—assimilating information, comprehending relationships, and developing reasonable conclusions—that require attention and focused concentration without really having to think them through. Speed-of-processing training is essentially exercising the brain.

The UAB study involved subjects using a computer to perform challenging activities designed to preserve, enhance, or develop cognitive abilities. Researchers measured the cognitive function of each group before and after study. The study utilized computerized brain-speed training from Posit Science for the experimental group.

Speed-of-processing training has been studied extensively in older adults, Vance says. "These studies have shown that even as people age, computer-based cognitive training improves speed of processing, sustained visual attention, and complex reaction time. The goal was to see if the same held true for people with HIV-based cognitive issues."

That turned out to be the case, Vance says. “The group that did the computer-based training showed significant improvements in visual processing speed and attention—an important measure of brain function—as well as in timed instrumental activities of daily living, which measure how quickly a person can do everyday activities, versus the group that did not use the computer-based training,” he explains.

In an exit survey, participants who did the computer-based training also indicated that they felt the training had improved their functioning moderately or better in mental abilities, memory, speed of processing and attention.

“This study shows people with HIV have non-pharmacologic options to consider that can improve cognitive functioning in areas that directly affect quality of life,” Vance says. “Based on this research, my team would suggest cognitive exercises to people with HIV who have noticed issues and who want to improve their brain health.”

### **Stribild ("Quad") Approved for First-Line Use; Becomes Third Single-Pill Regimen** - Source [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#)

The U.S. FDA recently approved [Stribild](#) (elvitegravir, [cobicistat](#), [emtricitabine](#), [tenofovir](#) disoproxil fumarate), a new once-a-day combination pill to treat HIV-1 infection in adults who have never been treated for HIV infection.

Stribild contains two previously approved HIV drugs plus two new drugs, elvitegravir and cobicistat. Elvitegravir is an HIV integrase strand transfer inhibitor, a drug that interferes with one of the enzymes that HIV needs to multiply. Cobicistat, a pharmacokinetic enhancer, inhibits an enzyme that metabolizes certain HIV drugs and is used to prolong the effect of elvitegravir. The combination of emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, approved in 2004 and marketed as [Truvada](#), blocks the action of another enzyme that HIV needs to replicate in a person's body. Together, these drugs provide a complete treatment regimen for HIV infection.

"Through continued research and drug development, treatment for those infected with HIV has evolved from multi-pill regimens to single-pill regimens," said Edward Cox, M.D., M.P.H., director of the Office of Antimicrobial Products in FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "New combination HIV drugs like Stribild help simplify treatment regimens."

Stribild's approval is the latest HIV/AIDS-related action taken by the FDA this year. Other actions include approval of the first over-the-counter home-use rapid [HIV test](#); approval of the first drug for pre-exposure prophylaxis in combination with safer sex practices to reduce the risk of sexually acquired HIV infection in adults at high risk; and

commemoration of the full or tentative approvals of more than 150 antiretroviral products for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to treat those in countries most affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The safety and effectiveness of Stribild was evaluated in 1,408 adult patients not previously treated for HIV in two double-blind clinical trials. Patients were randomly assigned to receive Stribild or [Atripla](#), in the first trial; and Stribild or Truvada plus [atazanavir](#) and [ritonavir](#) in the second trial.

The studies were designed to measure the percentage of patients who had an undetectable amount of HIV in their blood at 48 weeks. Results showed between 88 percent and 90 percent of patients treated with Stribild had an undetectable amount of HIV in their blood, compared with 84 percent treated with Atripla and 87 percent treated with Truvada plus atazanavir and ritonavir.

Like labels of many other drugs used to treat HIV, Stribild's label carries a Boxed Warning alerting that the drug can cause a buildup of lactic acid in the blood and severe liver problems, both of which can be fatal. The Boxed Warning also states that Stribild is not approved to treat chronic [hepatitis B](#) virus infection.

Common side effects observed in clinical trials include nausea and [diarrhea](#). Serious side effects include new or worsening kidney problems, decreased bone mineral density, fat redistribution and changes in the immune system (immune reconstitution syndrome). Stribild's label gives advice to health care providers on how to monitor patients for kidney or bone side effects.

Gilead Sciences, Stribild's manufacturer, is required to conduct additional studies to help further characterize the drug's safety in women and children, how resistance develops, and the possibility of interactions between Stribild and other drugs.

## **What You Should Know Before Choosing An Energy Supplier**

Source: <http://www.dps.ny.gov/escoalert.htm>

More than a million business and residential customers in New York State are now purchasing their electricity and natural gas from an energy service company (ESCO).

Learning about the competitive energy marketplace, and how to take advantage of it, requires understanding of some basic information. Your energy bill consists of two parts - supply and delivery. You can purchase your energy supply from either an ESCO or your local electric or gas utility. The delivery portion of your energy service will continue to be provided only by your distribution utility.

There are many ESCOs providing a wide variety of “products” and pricing. Some provide long-term fixed prices; others offer variable rates that change with the market; others give the option for customers to lock-in a rate during certain peak months. Some ESCO service is provided at a variable price on a month-to-month basis that can be cancelled at any time. In other cases, ESCOs require customers to enter into a contract for their purchases. In some instances the contract requires the customer to commit to purchasing its energy from the ESCO for a specified period of time. The consumer selects the choice that’s best for them.

ESCOs must take the following steps before offering customers energy including:

- Demonstrate they are a certified business registered with New York State;
- Meet the Public Service Commission’s eligibility criteria, including the filing of their standard customer contracts and disclosure statements;
- Establish a complaint handling procedure which is consistent with the New York State Home Energy Fair Practices Act (HEFPA).
- Provide financial information to the local utility company to fulfill required credit-worthiness standards.

Before choosing an ESCO you should:

- *Compare* prices and services offered.
- *Review* terms which may cover fees, deposits, renewals, switching procedures.
- *Consider* customer service features including complaint handling, hours of operation, and toll-free numbers.
- *Research* the company's background. You may want to know how long the company has been in business, the company's location or if it is affiliated with a utility or any other company.
- *Always* review the terms and conditions before committing to an ESCO offer.

If you decide not to switch to an ESCO, you don't have to do anything. Your utility will continue to provide you electricity. If you agree to buy electricity from an ESCO, your utility will send you a verification letter that you have chosen an ESCO for your electricity supply. If the ESCO in the letter is not the ESCO you chose, or you did not intend to switch, contact your utility immediately.

### Checking Your Bill(s)

To avoid any problems after you switch, carefully read bill(s) you receive. Whether you get a single bill from your utility or separate bills from the utility and ESCO, make sure the ESCO you chose is correctly identified and that the charge for services is correct. If you have any questions, contact the consumer information numbers on the bills.

## Quick Facts:

- Your energy service can't be switched without your approval.
- ESCOs cannot physically disconnect your service. You can only be disconnected by the local utility after it follows Public Service Commission rules.
- Local utilities will continue to deliver your electricity, and the PSC will continue to oversee system reliability.
- The Public Service Commission handles complaints against utilities and ESCOs.
- Your local utility distribution company or ESCO can provide you with information.
- Consumers may also contact the New York State Public Service Commission for assistance at [powertochoose@dps.ny.gov](mailto:powertochoose@dps.ny.gov).

## **\*\*Update: “New” Retreat/Camping Weekend has been offered\*\***

One of the churches groups that attend our Friends Dinner became aware of how our yearly “Sky Lake” retreat had come to an end. They have the ability to offer us a weekend camping trip (tent camping) at their place also in Winsor. This would not be a S.T.A.P. event so some things are going to be different. They have a Nurse for us just like all the other times. All the details are still being worked out and some of the info they need to know is approx. how many would like to attend. The dates would be June 28/29/30 (Friday @ 3pm → Sunday @ 12noon) and they need to have a “headcount” no later than March 2013. Call Vickie Traves (#607-669-4039) for additional information or any questions; R.S.V.P. to Vickie with your interest to attend A.S.A.P.

Updates will be available in the newsletter until the March deadline, after - only those attending will get updates. Spread the word, not everybody gets the newsletter.

## **FREE LAWYER? GOT IT!**

Have you had the opportunity to meet Rob Lukow or Lyndsey McKinstry of the AIDS Law Project at Legal Services of Central New York (LSCNY) out of Syracuse? If not, you will have many more chances in the future! Beginning in November, the AIDS Law Project will host a regular schedule of clinic hours at STAP offices in Johnson City and Ithaca. To qualify for this free legal service you must be HIV+ or an individual with AIDS. Sign-up sheets will be provided at STAP locations for you to schedule to see an attorney during the clinic hours. You may bring any legal question or problem that you have to the attorneys, and they will do their best to help you. For further information, contact Stacy Nickerson at STAP, 607-798-1706, or Rob Lukow at LSCNY, 315-703-6529.

## **ON GOING MEETINGS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

### **Join/ Attend: Consumer Advisory Committee [CAC] Meetings**

The STAP Consumer Advisory Committee is a committee facilitated by and made up of STAP clients who welcome other consumers and their significant others, caretakers and family to join them at any Friends Dinner; the floor is open so concerns can be addressed as soon as possible. This collaborative effort provides a confidential space for clients to make recommendations regarding STAP services in a non-judgmental environment. The meetings are held during the Friends Dinner, Tuesdays @ 5:45 at Trinity Memorial Church (corner of Main St & Oak St) in downtown Binghamton. Call 1-800-333-0892 for directions or details. If you cannot attend, mail suggestions to STAP, 122 Baldwin St, Johnson City, NY 13790, Attention: CAC. CAC encourages consumers in other counties to organize meetings in their area.

### **Friends Who Care Support Groups**

Broome County: “Friends Who Care” meets every Tuesday at 3 pm - 4:30 pm at Trinity Memorial Church located at 44 Main St. in Binghamton... Come join us for Binghamton’s HIV/AIDS Support Group \*(open to clients only). Also stay for a good (free) meal afterwards at the “Friends Dinner”.

\* Recently we have had some new members starting to attend, let me say again - “Welcome”. This group of Friends started up 4 years ago when we were unhappy with the “canned” therapy we were getting at our local mental health. Trinity came to our rescue and allowed us to hold our meetings prior to the Friends Dinners on Tuesdays. The bonds we have formed over time have allowed us to call each other “family” - this is truly a “support group”. We consider ourselves “Lucky” to be part of this.

Chemung County: Men Living with HIV Support Group; 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month; 6-7:30pm; Ivy Clinic, 600 Ivy St., Suite 206, Elmira. For more information people can contact: [Lynn Bassler, LMSW](#) Treatment Adherence Counselor, Ivy Clinic, 737-8188.

Tompkins County: The Ivy Clinic is pleased to let all HIV+ men in the Ithaca and surrounding area know there is a support group that is held the third Tuesday of every month at the Ithaca STAP office. Time for the group is 6-7:30 pm and topics vary. If you are interested in attending please e-mail Shannon Sprague at [ssprague@aomc.org](mailto:ssprague@aomc.org) for further information.



## Friends Dinner

“Friends” meet every Tuesday for a time of fellowship and food. Join us at Trinity Memorial Church (corner of Main & Oak St. - across from the High School) in Binghamton. Doors open at 5PM and dinner is served @ 5:30. No charge, just come with a smile and a friendly attitude - ready to meet friends and have a hearty meal. Parking is on Oak St. behind the Church Annex. Use the Oak St. entrance for the cafeteria. Call your case manager for info. Free bus passes available for transportation to/from the dinner (STAP clients only). For more info about the “Friends Dinner”, call STAP and they will get you in touch with Bill.

## Free Anonymous & Confidential Rapid HIV Testing

Walk-in *Anonymous* testing is available in the STAP Johnson City office Mondays from 1:00-4:30PM and Thursdays from 1:00-3:00PM. *Confidential* testing is available in the Johnson City office Thursdays from 9:00AM - 12:00PM at 122 Baldwin Street, Johnson City, NY 13790. Walk-in *Anonymous* Testing is also available Tuesdays from 9:00AM-11:30AM, and *Confidential* testing is Thursdays, 9:00AM-11:30AM at STAP's Ithaca office located at 501 S. Meadow Street, Ithaca, NY. For more information and other testing opportunities available throughout the month, please call (607)798-1706.

## Free EDUCATIONAL Lunch: November & December 2012

NOV EVENT: Nov. 7th 2012 @ 12 noon (Wednesday)

Guest Speaker: Dr. Amadou Diagne ( he has spoken to us in the past )

DEC EVENT: Dec. 5th 2012 @ 12 noon (Wednesday). A guest speaker will be present.

From this point on, all these “lunches” will be held at Grandes on Vestal Ave. If anyone is unsure where this is Martha will help you with that....

\* As usual seating is limited (you & a guest only) and must be reserved with Martha at least a week before the event. *R.S.V.P. to Martha at # 607-644-7586.\**

*These are “learning events” - please respect everyone’s right to learn.*

\*\* Please turn off your cell phones. Expecting important calls? Vibrate!

Please leave the room if you must take a call during the lunch event.

## **Nutrition Education Services**

Greeting friends, my name is Eric Krohn and I am STAP's new Nutrition Education Specialist. I have a background as a chef and dietitian. My hope is providing enhanced access to nutritious foods, as well as the knowledge to make meals with them! Soon the nutrition program will be soliciting for participants, and we look forward to working with you in the near future. Our program requires a dietary evaluation (done by Registered Dietitians) in order to receive individual and group nutrition education sessions from yours truly. Participants also receive gift cards (for nutritious foods) or groceries/pantry bags filled with great foods and recipes. The program is designed to serve individuals with the greatest need with educational sessions in addition to food. In addition I am always available for questions from anyone, not just program participants. I look forward to meeting you all soon. Have a great day and an even better dinner!

Please find the recipe in this month's newsletter and try it out. You will see that the recipe contains nutritional information for the dish, as well as serving size information. I will be including a recipe each month that is designed for individuals with HIV to maximize their health and have a greater understanding of their dietary health needs.

## **Client Satisfaction Survey**

The annual Client Satisfaction Survey was enclosed in last month's newsletter (also available at all the STAP offices). Please complete it and give STAP feedback about all of their programs and services. You may put your name on it if you like, but it is optional. You can drop it off at any office location or you can turn it in directly to Michelle McElroy.

## Ask the Medical Advocate

**\*\* DO YOU Know What the C.H.O.I.C.E.S. Program Is? \*\***

C.H.O.I.C.E.S. is a self-paced educational series designed specifically for YOU to learn and understand HIV and your body. Whether you take one quick course or decide to go through the entire program and take charge of YOUR HIV, ask a Medical Advocate about C.H.O.I.C.E.S. today...

Medical Advocacy Coordinator: Stacy # (607) 798-1706 Ext. 210

Medical Advocate: Autumn # (607) 426-9445

\* Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 4:30 pm \*(new time)\* - just before the *Friends Dinner* come join us for our monthly C.H.O.I.C.E.S. module (open to clients). We have found that we get more out of the program when we learn the modules as a group. Informative questions and discussions are raised.

### Seasonal Health Reminders -

*Get your flu shot now. If you're not due to see the doctor this month - call and make an appointment. Be pro-active when it comes to your health!*

*Are you a candidate for receiving the pneumonia vaccine?? You may be if you are HIV+, have respiratory concerns, have a history of pneumonia, or have other risks. You do not need this vaccine every year, so check with your doctor to see if you should be receiving one this season.*