



The Phoenix

Volume I, Issue 3

March 1, 2011

After much consideration the board has decided to change the name of the newsletter to

The Phoenix!

Like the mythical bird, we regularly seem to rise from the ashes.

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vpwas.org

Food Security Notice

Starting spring 2011, Vancouver Island Persons with AIDS Society (VIPWAS), in concert with AIDS Vancouver Island, will be hosting a community-based research study exploring the impacts of food security on health outcomes in people living with HIV/AIDS across Canada. This study is a national collaboration between community organizations and academic institutions, including AIDS Vancouver, the Pacific AIDS Network, the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CFE), Simon Fraser University, the University of British Columbia, the Ontario HIV Treatment Network, and COCQ-SIDA, and is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

As a community-based research project committed to promoting equity, the study is employing people living with HIV/AIDS to be

peer research assistants (PRA). This peer-to-peer approach creates a meaningful and respectful research environment where you can feel more comfortable sharing details about your life. The PRAs have also undergone professional training with Terry Howard, the CIHR BC Community-Based Research Facilitator in HIV/AIDS, to ensure that the highest standards of data collection, ethics and participant confidentiality are met.

Food security has received increased attention lately, but for people living with HIV/AIDS, it is an even bigger issue. A past study from BC-CfE's LISA cohort found that among all participants on treatment in BC, 71% were food *insecure* and were seven times more likely to report being so than the Canadian general population! That is an alarming amount of people who are either living with the anxiety of not being able to put food on the table, missing meals outright or not getting

the proper quality of food their bodies need to help fight the virus. Making sure that people living with HIV/AIDS have access to affordable and nutritional food in an appropriate manner is an issue of everyday and long-term survival that needs informed and coordinated action.

The Food Security team is looking to recruit a diverse group of people living HIV/AIDS from Vancouver Island to participate in this one-time study. Should you choose to participate, you will be interviewed by a peer research assistant in your area. The interview will also involve an online 24-hour dietary recall to measure daily nutrient intake. Look for details on how to schedule an interview in the next few months. The information will be posted in the VIPWAS office or on their website. (vpwas.org)

What is Food Security?

My name is, Kecia Larkin. I am going to be sharing my experience of my involvement with the food security project that is happening. I have been trained with other peer research assistants this past winter, to interview our peers about "Food Security". What is "Food Security? you may ask. It is looking at how you are doing with the food you eat, how often you eat and how you access food. I will be around VPWAS working on this project until the summer.

I have been positive since 1989, and am very excited to be able to learn more about research, seeing as I have been the subject of one or two myself over the years. I also have been a co-investigator on a community based research project in Alberta, called "Challenging Lifestyles". Community based research is a valuable tool, that shows how we are impacted by many health determinants, or things impact our health. I encourage you to learn more about Community Based Research, and maybe one day you will find yourself asking the questions, yourself. I look forward to meeting you, and will enjoy being around VPWAS completing the interviews soon.

Spring Break Travel Tips

As Spring Break approaches, many people take this time to leave home and take a holiday or visit family and friends. Over the past few years, the travel industry has made significant changes that impact your average person and have often resulted in uncomfortable and even dangerous situations. Here are a few tips to help make your trip easier and avoid unnecessary stress.

Rule number one; always pack enough medications to last your entire journey plus an additional 7 days. Anything can happen that could potentially delay your safe return home. Also when flying, never pack your medications in any 'checked' luggage. Always pack it in your carry on bags. This is especially important if any 'connecting flights' are involved. You might arrive in Ottawa, but your luggage can be half way to Singapore. Lost luggage is more prevalent than you think and often, never found. It is wise to see your doctor before you travel and ask him for a printout of your medications and carry this list with you. This can help you immensely with any overly inquisitive customs agent.

Rule number two; dress appropriately. Airport security checks are not what they used to be. You will likely have to remove your shoes,

belt, watch, bracelets, empty all pockets (button fly jeans are even an issue) and so on. Think it through, wear something comfortable with no metal and be prepared. The more informed you are of the expectations and how you prepare, the better you can get through any security check quickly and easily without the intrusive searches and the new 'body scan' systems currently in place. Also there are many restrictions on what you can actually take on board the aircraft with you. Be prepared and avoid having your aerosol shaving cream or hairspray confiscated.

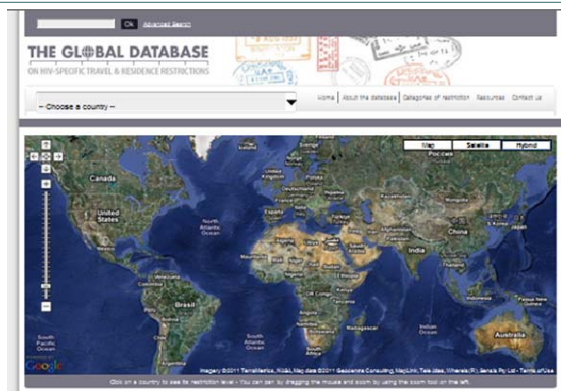


If you plan on traveling abroad to foreign lands, you may want to do some research on the local HIV/AIDS organizations. You will find them everywhere from Armenia to Zimbabwe. Your two most important possessions are your medications and your passport. Canadian passports are the most valuable on the black market. Take every precaution to protect this document.

In most countries, there is help if you should happen to need it. Be aware – there are still many places where HIV/AIDS is highly stigmatized and shunned from the community. Remember, medications have often been stolen from hotel room mini fridges and guests suddenly asked to leave their hotel. If you choose to store them in this manner, put them in a potato chip bag or something that is not transparent. Also, many countries still ban entry of people with HIV. Only upon arrival, people have been detained and held until an immediate departure has been established. Check and ensure that your destination is not one of these countries. Only recently (2009), the United States lifted its disgraceful ban on HIV infected people from entering. You should no longer be asked by US Border guards if you're "carrying any medications?" I am familiar with this through personal experience arriving in Port Angeles, Washington on a road trip to Arizona. It was a matter of lying or being refused entry.

Although I have written this mainly for travel by air and to foreign destinations, consider these as sensible ideas even when travel is to Nanaimo or Vancouver. No matter where you plan to go, be careful, be prepared and most of all enjoy your trip to the fullest. Travel is one of life's greatest pleasures.

~ R Robertson ~



<http://hivtravel.org/>

HIV+ Travel Resources

There are many countries around the world that restrict the entry, residence and stay of foreigners who are HIV positive. These countries perpetuate stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV by singling out HIV as a "dangerous disease".

The Global Database on HIV Restrictions
www.hivtravel.org

On "About.com" you will find the HIV travel requirements listed by country <http://aids.about.com/od/legalissues/a/travelindex.htm>

If you are traveling near or far let us know, and we can help you find resources.

The Sunni Side

Note on .ORG

Please note that our e-mail address has changed to support@vpwas.org. This changed earlier in February, if you tried e-mailing us during this change we apologize for any inconvenience. Check your bookmarks as well for the website, is now also www.vpwas.org or www.vpwas.ca. Look for more exciting changes to the website coming soon!

We can also be found "social networking" on www.facebook.com/vpwas and [twitter/vpwas](https://twitter.com/vpwas).

The Circle Group

The *Circle* support group, facilitated by Nicole Jackson of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre, (held at VIPWAS office on Thursdays at 1:30) is going strong! Thank you Nicole for your awesome work!

Thank you to Nicole as well for the invitation to attend your wonderful event "What's Love Got To Do With It?" on February 11th held at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre. It was a pleasure meeting your staff and co-workers. The attendance for this event was very successful.

Poetry Contest

We are still going forward with the **VIPWAS Poetry Contest!** Get those creative juices flowing and put pen to paper and express yourself in the form of poetry.

This competition is open to poems in any style and on any subject under 30 lines long. The closing date for submissions is April 15th, 2011. The prize for first place is \$100, second place \$50, and \$25 for third. Winners will be announced in the May 2011 issue of The Phoenix! and published in both the newsletter and vpwas.org.

Send your submissions to: support@vpwas.org or drop of at the VPWAS office at 101-1139 Yates Street.

The Phoenix

If you have ideas for articles or submissions, be it photos, poems, artwork, stories or issues that you would like to have covered in [The Phoenix](http://ThePhoenix.com), please contact us at support@vpwas.org, call us at 250.382.7927 or drop into the office.

Remember, [The Phoenix](http://ThePhoenix.com) is for you, **VIPWAS** members.

Easter Dinner and Scavenger Hunt

The Easter long-weekend is fast approaching and we are now taking reservations for **VIPWAS** Easter dinner that will be held at the New Horizons

Centre in James Bay, we will also be holding a scavenger hunt with prizes for first, second and third place.

Scavenger hunt begins at 3pm, Dinner at 5pm.

Please call/e-mail in advance to book your place.

PEER SUPPORT AFTER HOURS

What does Peer Support mean to you?

We know that not all of our members can make it to the office during the daytime office hours, perhaps a Thursday evening peer support group or even a casual coffee house meet-up is more up your alley? Contact the office and let us know if this interests you! We are open to hearing all new ideas.

We are always looking for more volunteers, please feel free to contact me anytime.

Norman (Sunni) Tesluk,

Program Co-ordinator, Event Planner

101-1139 Yates Street

Victoria, BC

Ph: 250-382-7927

Cell: 250-888-2637

support@vpwas.org

Schedule of Events

- **Wings cheque pick-up**
Thursday, March 31, 2011
- **Art for HAARTs**
Art Therapy Program
Wednesdays 6 to 8:30pm
VIPWAS Office
(session full)
- **The Circle**
Thursdays 1:30 p.m.
- **Spaghetti Dinner and a Movie**
"Unstoppable"
Saturday March 19, 2011
New Horizons Centre (James Bay)

Programs and Services on going

Treatment Library

VIPWAS has an extensive treatment library. Contact the office if you have any questions regarding your medications or other health related issues.

Mon - Thurs 10 - 4 / Friday, 10 - 3

Peer Support

At **VIPWAS** peer support is available **24/7**. Our peer supporters offer group or one on sessions with any member free of charge. We provide a calm atmosphere where anyone can come and talk and be heard. We will do our best to help resolve any problem that poses stress and difficulties.

Peer supporters are not crisis counselors or mental health workers but we are here to listen to you, and help you in any way we can to find solutions or peace of mind. If you think you are in need of more extensive counseling, we will help refer you to the resources to meet your needs.

Mon - Thurs 10 - 4 / Friday, 10 - 3

Computer Access

Computers are available to members free of charge, to check e-mail or for internet research. (résumé and cover letter assistance is also available).

Mon - Thurs 10 - 4 / Friday, 10 - 3

The Circle

A healing circle facilitated by Nicole Jackson from the Victoria Native Friendship Centre.
Every Thursday 1:30 p.m.

Cure-Based Research: are designer genes the answer?

Timothy Brown, 44, may be the only person cured of HIV. Previously known in medical circles as “the Berlin Patient”, Brown underwent a stem cell transplant for the treatment of leukemia in 2007, transferring genetic material to him from one of the rare (1-2% of the population) donors who have a natural immunity to HIV. He has been off HIV meds since then and, according to his hematologist, there is no trace of HIV in his body. (By the way, his leukemia was cured too.....which was the primary purpose of the procedure)

*“Timothy Brown, 44,
may be the only person
cured of HIV”*

This unique case has spurred scientists at Sangamo Biosciences Inc. (Richmond, California) to duplicate these results without the high risks of stem-cell transplants. Sangamo is conducting two Phase 1 studies of its gene therapy in 21 people: one study will look at HIV+ volunteers with leukemia or lymphoma; the other in HIV+ volunteers without cancer. Preliminary data will be reported at a major AIDS conference in late February.

After drawing a sample of the patient’s blood and sepa-

rating the infection-fighting white blood cells, they are then modified using naturally occurring proteins called “zinc fingers” that cut into patient’s DNA at selected points. Chopping the DNA in the middle of a gene called CCR5 eliminates a receptor that HIV uses to gain entry into a cell. These modified cells are then returned to the patient through an infusion.

One participant, Matt Sharp, 54, an AIDS educator who was diagnosed in 1988 and today takes a daily regime of 3 antivirals, enrolled in the trial a year ago. Since last summer when he was given an infusion of

his own gene-modified T-cells, the cells that help the immune system fight infection, the number of those cells has double, he said. “I’m just hoping I could get an infusion once a year that would keep HIV under control and I won’t have to deal with the effects of taking medication.”

For more information go to: www.businessweek.com and type “Sangamo” into the site’s search engine. The article, dated Feb. 10, 2011, also provides a video link to an on-camera interview with Timothy Brown.

Treatment Holidays Can Cause Long Term Problems

Taking breaks from HIV therapy can lead to long-term adverse outcomes even after treatment is re-started according to a Swiss study published in the February 20, 2011 issue of *AIDS*.

The large international SMART study (Strategic Management of AntiRetroviral Therapy) showed that treatment breaks –especially in people with relatively low CD4 counts – could have detrimental effects in the short term.

Researchers with the Swiss HIV Cohort Study have looked at the long term effects of treatment interruption and clinical events following 2,491 participants over an average of 7 years and stratified according to treatment consistency:

- Group A: interrupted treatment at least once (n= 1,271 or 51%)
- Group B: continuous treatment with intermittent viral “blips” (defined as occasional detectable viral load not exceeding 1,000) (n=469 or 19%)
- Group C: continuous treatment with sustained viral suppression (n=751 or 30%)

Results:

- At the end of the study CD4 cell counts rose in all groups but more so in those with more treatment consistency: 427 CD4 cells in Group A; 525 cells in Group B and 645 cells in Group C.
- Percentages reaching a CD cell count above 500: 37.2% in Group A; 55.8% in Group B and 68.0% in group C, a significant difference.
- Participants in Group A had more HIV-related symptoms and more AIDS-defining conditions than those on continuous therapy.
- Participants in Group A had an increased risk of death compared to Group C (20 vs. 8 per 1000 person-years).
- Major risk factors for an inability to reach a CD4 count above 500: lower baseline CD4 count, older age and hepatitis C infection.

The researchers conclude: “ If any interruption is required, it should be as short as possible to avoid poor clinical outcomes.”

Bits and Bites

**April is tax month in Canada...
Do you need your taxes done?**



TAPS offers Income Tax Preparation every Thursday morning from 9-11am. This is a free, face-to-face program offered by trained volunteers provided on a first come first serve basis, so it's best to get to the TAPS office early. Call for an appointment.

Together Against Poverty Society
#302 - 895 Fort Street
Victoria BC V8W 1H7
Phone: (250) 361-3521
Fax: (250) 361-3541

**Education and Treatment
Drop In Support Group**

An informal group for those living with HIV/AIDS to attend for general support and information about HIV care and treatment.

Where:
Cool Aid Community Health Centre
713 Johnson Street

When:
Fridays, 10-11am

Facilitators:
Dr. Chris Fraser and health centre staff

Light snacks and refreshments will be provided

Did You Know ...

There are three locations in Victoria that you can get your HIV meds. They are Royal Jubilee Hospital, Access Community Health (Cool Aid), or you can have you scripts transferred to LalliCare Pharmacy (in the same building as VIPWAS) or your pharmacy of choice.



1139 Yates Street
Victoria B.C.

Phone: 250.386.5100
<http://lallicareclinic.ca/>

VIPWAS Circle Group

The VIPWAS Circle group is facilitated by Nicole Jackson Aboriginal Health Outreach Worker at the Victoria Native Friendship Centre.

The Circle is a space for those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS to come and meet others; it is a space where members have the opportunity to share their challenges and

triumphs; or just sit and listen.

Participants are requested to maintain confidentiality of the circle, "what's said in the Circle, stays in the Circle".

The Circle has recently passed its 2nd year and is going strong. Those who wish to come to

this circle group, please feel free to

contact the VIPWAS office, or drop-in on Thursday afternoons at 1:30pm.



*"what's said in the
Circle,
stays in the Circle"*

VIPWAS POETRY CONTEST!

Calling on all members of VIPWAS to enter VIPWAS Poetry Contest. Get those creative juices flowing and put pen to paper and express yourself in the form of poetry.

This competition is open to poems in any style and on any subject

Call for submissions
*"I think that I shall
never see,
a poem lovely as a
tree ..."*

under 30 lines long. The closing date for submissions is April 15th, 2011. The prize for first place is \$100, second place \$50, and \$25 for third. Winners will be announced in the May 2011 issue of The Phoenix! and pub-

lished in both the newsletter and on the VIPWAS website.

Send your submissions to: support@vpwas.org or drop of at the VPWAS office at 101-1139 Yates Street.

Stay tuned for more contests
VIPWAS: Photography, Short Story

VANCOUVER ISLAND PERSONS LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS SOCIETY (VIPWAS)



#101—1139 Yates Street
Victoria, British Columbia
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Toll Free: 1.877.382.7927
E-mail: support@vpwas.org

www.vpwas.org

Office Hours
Monday to Thursday 10 - 4pm
Friday 10 - 3pm



Facebook.com/VPWAS



Twitter.com/VPWAS

Invitation to All *POSITIVE* WOMEN IN B.C.

ViVA

ViVA is an on-line advocacy and peer-support network created by and for HIV positive women. We welcome and encourage ALL women living with HIV in B.C. to participate.

ViVA runs a listserv (confidential group e-mail list) that we utilize to communicate between positive women across the province.

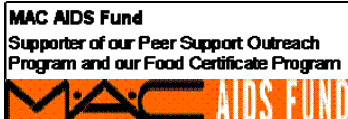
If you are interested in being on the ViVA listserv simply e-mail vivawomen@gmail.com and/or call Margarite toll free at 1.866.482.3445.



Sponsors and Supporters



Vancouver Island PWA Society is grateful to our many generous private donors, corporate and community sponsors



We would also like to thank the many private individual anonymous donors who have contributed funds and gifts.



Health Canada has granted Priority Review



The **PHOENIX** is a publication of the Vancouver Island Persons with HIV/AIDS Society. **VPWAS** is a peer-driven non-profit organization run by and for people living with HIV and people co-infected with HCV.

We welcome your input, ideas and involvement.




Contact the office for more information about programs and services.

250-382-7927, or drop in at 1139 Yates Street (in the Lalli Care Clinic Building) or email: support@vpwas.org or visit Web: <http://www.vpwas.org/>



Note: Friends of Vancouver Island Persons Living with HIV/AIDS Society (VIPWAS) or persons featured in our newsletter, photos, videos or web posts should not be assumed to be HIV+ unless expressly stated by the person themselves.

March 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Peer Support	2 ARTS for HAARTs 6 to 8:30pm	3 Peer Support Circle Group 1:30pm	4	5
6	7	8 Peer Support	9 ARTS for HAARTs 6 to 8:30pm	10 Peer Support Circle Group 1:30pm	11	12
13 Daylight Saving Begins 	14 Commonwealth Day	15 Peer Support	16 ARTS for HAARTs 6 to 8:30pm	17 Peer Support Circle Group 1:30pm St. Patrick's Day 	18	19 Spaghetti Dinner & A Movie "Unstoppable" New Horizons Centre 5pm
20 First Day of Spring 	21	22 Peer Support	23 ARTS for HAARTs 6 to 8:30pm	24 Peer Support Circle Group 1:30pm	25	26
27	28	29	30 ARTS for HAARTs 6 to 8:30pm	31 Peer Support Circle Group 1:30pm Wings pick-up		