

Tips from a Pharmacist:

A Simple Approach

By **CHINNY SODHI, PHARM.D.**
WALGREENS SPECIALTY PHARMACY
HIV/HEPATITIS PROGRAMS

As we all know, pills and capsules present unique experiences and set of rules for everybody. With food or without food, morning or evening, drug interactions, etc, etc, the details are never ending.

Antiviral regimens are usually comprised of 3 or more medications. These maybe prescribed by your physician as one tablet or different tablets depending on which regimen suits you best. Each medication in the combination plays a unique role in suppressing the HIV virus.

An important factor that determines the effectiveness of the antiviral regimen is adherence. Adherence means that you take your medication every day, exactly as prescribed by your physician, without skipping any doses. Any dosages missed or taken improperly can lead to the following detrimental effects:

- ... Increase in viral load, which will then lead to a lower CD4 count.
- ... Viral resistance, which may lead to ineffectiveness of the medication.

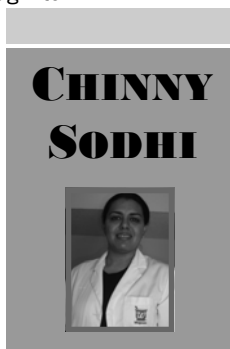
Your pharmacist can be a great resource to help you make your medication experience smooth and hassle free.

1. Choose a pharmacy that can meet your individualized needs. Find out about any special services the pharmacy offers, e.g., special packaging, delivery, refill reminders etc.

2. Use a pill organizer or a request special packaging of your medications to help you remember to take your medications.

3. Try to use the same pharmacy for all your medication requirements. This way they can monitor for any drug interactions and any discrepancies.

(Continued on page 4)



C.A.R.E.
PROGRAM

People Who CARE

The C.A.R.E. Program and Clinics are affiliated with St. Mary Medical Center

Dining Out Raises Funds

With CARE to Dine on Thursday, August 21st, eight local restaurants helped to raise over \$3,000 to support the programs of C.A.R.E..

The restaurants included:

- Café Ambrosia
- Rick & Brian's Magnolia Café
- Café Sevilla
- The Pizza Place & Garden Café
- 212 Degree Bistro
- The Original Park Pantry

Paradise Piano Bar/Restaurant Two Umbrellas Café

Thanks to all the patrons, staffs, and owners for their generous support.

Thanks also to C.A.R.E. staffers Jay Villarreal, John Blasco, and Ron Yolo for coordinating this first time effort - a great event to build on for next year.

Inside this issue:

Introducing: Charlotte Mata, BSN RN	2	Things I Have Learned	6
Medical Visits	2	Support Groups	7

Introducing: Charlotte Mata, BSN RN

Hello Everyone!

As some of you may know, I am the new nurse for the C.A.R.E. Clinic. I wanted to send a note with a few details about myself to all of those I have yet to meet or speak with, and even those who already know me.

My name is Charlotte. I have quite a long list of events that has led me to my current position, but I will attempt to keep it short and simple. I grew up in Long Beach, CA. I went to college at Long



Beach State and received my bachelors degree in Physiology-Chemistry in 2003. Immediately after college I flew to the East. First, stopping over in Chicago, IL for a summer, then to Philadelphia, PA where I continued to go to school. I did two years of graduate work at Drexel University in Philadelphia, and ended up completing my second bachelors degree in Nursing in 2007.

Once I became a Registered Nurse, I moved to Long Island, NY and worked at the St. Francis Hospital Cardiac Center for a year. I recently moved back to Long Beach to be with family. Since my move, I worked for 6 Bauer at St. Mary Medical

Center. Then a few months later I found out about this incredible opportunity to work for the C.A.R.E. Clinic. So, that brings us to where I am now.

I understand many of you will have to get used to the idea of a new RN, since Margaret was such an essential asset of the team. I welcome all of you to come see me or talk to me. My door is always open and I do hope you will take advantage of that. I look forward to meeting every one of you and working closely with you.

Thank you for taking the time to get to know me.

Medical Visits:

Getting The Most From Your Time With Providers

BY PAUL LOVELY, EDITOR

No matter where you go to receive your health care, you'll probably agree that there never seems to be enough time to spend with your doctor. HIV providers generally spend much more time with their patients than doctors in other specialties, yet the demands placed on their time outside the exam room are immense. As a result, you may sometimes feel that your visits are rushed, or there isn't enough time to get all your questions answered.

The bottom line is that time you spend with your doctor is an extremely valuable—yet limited—resource. With that in mind, here are some suggestions to help you prepare for and get the most from your provider visits.

Choose the right provider.

Your doctor should specialize in treating HIV disease. A good rule of thumb is that half or more of their patients should be people living with HIV.

You and your doctor should have similar ideas about treating HIV. Do you prefer a provider who is more aggressive or conservative in their approach?

Choose a doctor who communicates well with you. Does your doctor explain things in a way you can understand? Does your doctor listen to what you have to say?

Choose a doctor that is available to you. The best doctor in the world is of no benefit if you can't get an appointment to see them, or can't get in touch with them when you need to.

Prepare for your appointment ahead of time. Keep a running health journal/diary.

What's been going on since your last appointment? New problems or symptoms?—keep track of specifics such as frequency, time of day, severity. Mention problems like fatigue, not sleeping well, trouble concentrating or emotional issues.

Let your provider know about new or increasing side effects of your medica-

tions.

Are you taking any new medications—over-the-counter or prescription? How about vitamins or supplements?

Any changes in your diet or exercise?

Have you started or stopped using tobacco, alcohol or drugs?

How is your sexual health?

Have there been any changes in your relationships, family, living situation or employment?

You probably won't have time for all of these, so prioritize the top two or three things you want to talk about. You can leave a note with the doctor to let them know about the items you didn't get to discuss.

Bring information to help your provider, such as labs & notes from other doctors, pill bottles or med lists.

Always bring your insurance card(s) to your appointments. Has your insurance

(Continued on page 4)

CARE Client Picnic Photos



People Who CARE

**Volume 7, Issue 2
Fall 2008**

Editors:

Paul Lovely ✕ **Ralph Mayo**
In Memoriam: Kent Speirs

Columnists:

Charlotte Mata, BSN RN
Lisa Valtierra
Chinny Sodhi, PharmD.

Cartoonist: Bob Pond

www.careprogram.org

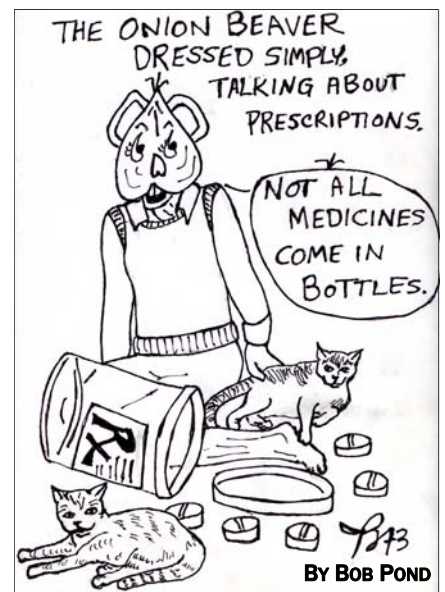
People Who CARE
1043 Elm Ave., Suite 300
Long Beach, CA 90813
Email: paul.lovely@chw.edu

All C.A.R.E. clients and staff are invited to send us comments, artwork, poetry, photographs, essays or other writing. Include your name, address, and phone number. All submissions are printed at the discretion of the editors.

People Who CARE is published by the C.A.R.E. Client Advisory Panel and is made possible by generous grants from Abbott Laboratories and Long Beach Lesbian & Gay Pride, Inc.

This project was supported by funds received from the L.A. County Office of AIDS Programs and Policy, the State of California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration.

The Onion Beaver



(Continued from page 1)

4. Get to know your pharmacist. Let your pharmacist know about any special requests or allergies etc.
5. Always have at least a 5-day emergency supply of medications on hand. Call your pharmacy several days in advance in case you are running low on medications.
6. Be informed about your medications. Educate yourself about the medications before you take them. Find out about side effects, food requirements, storage etc so you know what to expect.
7. Inform your pharmacist in case your provider tells you to stop taking any medications.
8. Do not change the medication schedule or the number of pills to be taken without speaking with your medical provider. The medication regimens are customized for you based on factors such as height, weight, other medications etc.
9. Consult your pharmacist in case you are experiencing side effects to your medications such as nausea, vomiting, dizziness etc. We have some tricks up our sleeves to help you tolerate your medications better.

10. Keep track of your insurance coverage and make sure you keep all the paperwork lined up. In most cases your ADAP expires on your birthday, so call and update well in advance.
11. Pay attention to medication storage instructions especially temperature requirements. Some medications need to be refrigerated in order to be stable.
12. Always carry a list of your medications with exact dosages in your wallet. Emergencies come unexpectedly.
13. Vitamins and herbs can cause side effects and drug interactions too. Make sure to inform your pharmacist and medical provider in case you are considering a new vitamin or herbal medication.
14. Utilize all resources offered for your health and wellness such as websites, educational seminars etc.
15. For any medication related issues, call your pharmacy first.

Remember, your pharmacist plays a key role in your healthcare team. To save time and get your questions answered about medication related concerns, your pharmacy is the best resource. Call your pharmacist for any questions, no appointments necessary.

SAVE THE DATES - CARE Holiday Parties

Adult Holiday Party

Thursday, December 11, 2008

4:00 to 6:00 PM

Family/Kids Holiday Party

Thursday, December 18, 2008

4:00 to 6:00 PM

(Continued from page 2)

changed?

Be sure the doctor's office and pharmacy have your most up-to-date contact information, including cell & home phone numbers and address.

Do your homework—educate yourself on treatment issues.

You and your doctor will be able to communicate more effectively if you have basic knowledge about your condition.

Utilize reliable internet resources such as *thebody.com* or *webmd.com*.

Utilize supportive healthcare professionals such as nurses, pharmacists, case managers and treatment educators for health information.

Be 100% honest.

How has your adherence to your meds been lately?

Don't be a hero—maybe side effects or symptoms are harder for you than they used to be.

Keep track of the time.

Show up for your appointments consistently and on time.

If you need to reschedule an appointment, call at least 24 hours ahead of time.

Be mindful that by honoring your time commitments, you're also honoring other patients who need to be seen in a timely manner.

Get your questions answered.

Write them down, and use the list to keep your thoughts organized. If you notice time is running short, refer to your list and ask those questions!

Take the answers home with you.

Ask for written material about medications, side effects and illnesses.

Take notes during an appointment and/or consider bringing someone with you who can also pay attention to what the doctor is saying and help get your questions answered.

Keep a wallet card to record your CD4 count and viral load. Ask for a copy of your most recent lab results for your records.

You should be given a printed medication list at every visit. Check to see that it's up to date, and keep a copy with you in your wallet or purse.

Be Well.

Triathlon Raises \$50,000 For CARE

The 10th Annual Long Beach Triathlon took to the streets—and waters—of the city early on Sunday, September 21st. Over 1300 people competed in the event, which included a half-mile swim, 12.5-mile bicycle course and a three-mile run along the shoreline of downtown Long Beach. The triathlon raised over \$50,000 to provide direct services to CARE clients.

Triathlon Pictures



Things I Have Learned

BY LISA VALTIERRA
ADVOCACY RELATIONS MANAGER
ABBOTT LABS

It has been 15 years since my diagnosis and my life has changed so much in the intervening years.

I remember imagining what my life would be like, and fortunately for me, my life is much better than I thought it ever would be. I clearly remember thinking that I would have been lucky to live 10 years beyond my initial diagnosis, and here I am, doing better than ever.

However, it is not luck that has allowed me to come so far. As anyone can tell you who is a long-term survivor of any life-threatening disease, not just AIDS, is that survival involves a lot of work. The most difficult work I ever did was recreating who I thought I should be. Growing up I think we all have our notions of who we want to be in our adult years. We have ideas, we make plans, we achieve goals and then wham! – we get something else entirely that throws our worlds into a spin. No one plans for HIV, but like it or not, it is right here with us and its not going away.

So here are some tips that have helped me not only survive, but succeed in living my life to the fullest.

... If you don't already have a physician you like, ask your local HIV service agency and your friends if they know of an HIV expert. While a General Practitioner is invaluable, it takes an HIV specialist to know how to handle HIV. I realize that not everyone can choose their healthcare providers due to limitations of insurance or healthcare setting, but there is al-

ways a way to make it work for you.

- ... Keep your appointments with your health care providers. While this sounds basic, it may help save your life because with regular visits, you can develop a relationship with your providers that will serve you well. You will be able to discuss things that are going on with you that include both physical and mental health.
- ... Ladies, find a gynecologist who knows about HIV. Don't be afraid to ask her (or him) how much they know about HIV. If they admit that they don't know much, ask your HIV specialist to recommend one or if they are willing to collaborate with your physician to make sure you get the best care possible.
- ... Pay attention to the rest of your health. Having HIV does not mean you can neglect the rest of your life. You still need to get your teeth checked regularly (2 times per year), have your vision checked regularly (especially if you have had an AIDS defining illness) and get all other regular health screenings as they become necessary/recommended.
- ... Remember that not everything is HIV related: sometimes our health may change that has nothing to do with HIV. If you notice changes in the way you feel, make an appointment with your physician. I learned the hard way that not reporting new symptoms can be very dangerous for your well being.
- ... If your doctor has prescribed HIV medi-

cations, TAKE THEM EVERY DAY AS PRESCRIBED. I cannot say that strenuously enough. Make friends with those meds because they will save your life. One thing is certain, the only goal HIV has is to kill you. Don't let it.

- ... Eat well. Cut out as much junk food as possible. I know it can be difficult to eat a healthy diet, but with some planning (and maybe some help from a nutritionist) you would be surprised how easy it can be to improve your food intake.
- ... Exercise. For some people exercise is a four-letter word. However, here are some ideas that may make it more palatable and that don't require a trip to the gym:
 - ... Dancing – even in your living room all by yourself
 - ... Walking – a simple walk around the block a few times will do wonders
 - ... Jumping rope – remember how fun it was when you were a kid?
 - ... Riding a bicycle – even if it has been a long time, you really don't forget how to ride a bike
 - ... Yoga – you can get on the internet and download some guided lessons or walk to your local library and borrow some lessons on DVD. Yoga DVDs are also fairly inexpensive if you want to buy them.
 - ... Try doing any of these things with a buddy if that's possible, but even if

(Continued on page 7)

Support Groups

Peer Treatment Support Program (PTSP)

1st and 3rd Tuesday | 11:00am - 1:00pm

Discussion and education regarding HIV treatment issues; peer support network. Meets at St. Mary's Parr Health Enhancement Center. Glenn Rm. (2nd Floor). Contact Paul Lovely at (562) 624-4963.

Young N POZ group

Time and location TBD each month

Support and social activities for Positives under 30. Please contact Elaine Ramos-Garcia, Treatment Advocate or John Blasco, LCSW at (562)624-4999 for more information.

FRESH (Focus, ReachOut, Empower, Support, Hope)

Every 3rd Wednesday | 6:00 - 7:30pm

An empowering support group for newly diagnosed individuals. Meets at St. Mary's Parr Health Enhancement Center. Contact Ron Yolo, RN at (562) 624-4945.

Crystal Meth, HIV & Me

Wednesdays | 4:00pm

Group meets at St. Mary Parr Health Enhancement Center (2nd floor). Contact Carlos Ruiz, MPH at (562) 624-4900 for more info.

Beyond Coping

Mondays | 6:00 pm

A Support Group for Living - A safe place to explore concerns, thoughts, feelings and identify new ways of thinking and behaving. To enroll please contact John Blasco, LCSW, at (562) 624-4915.

Women's Caucus

Last Monday of the month | 6:00 pm

Group meets at Long Beach Health Dept. 2525 Grand Ave. For more information, contact Mary Vigil at (213) 689-2191

A League of Their Own

Saturday | 12:00-1:30 pm

A support group for women living w/ HIV. Contact Mary Vigil at (213) 689-2191 for more info.

Living Infected, Freed, Eternally (L.I.F.E.)

Thursdays | 6:00 pm

A faith based support group for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Meets at Refiner's Fire Fellowship (Far West Media Services Building), 4140 Norse Way, Long Beach. For more information, call (562) 429-5111.

Trans-Forming

Thursdays | 7:00-8:30 pm

Support group for all Transgender men and women. Meets at The Center, contact (562) 434-4455 .

(Continued from page 7)

its not, you would be surprised how much better even a little activity will make you feel. I remember when I could not get out of bed and now I really think it's a joy to be able to move my body.

... Create goals that excite you and work to achieve them. If you need some help creating goals, try talking to a mental healthcare provider like a psychologist or a social worker- they are experts at this and can really give you some good advice.

... If you are working, keep working. If you are not working and are healthy, maybe its time to think about working again. California has lots of programs to get those on disability back to work without sacrificing your health benefits. Ask a knowledgeable benefits counselor for some assistance and also get some help rewriting your resume.

... Love yourself. Again, this may sound very basic but it is true. While you may not be able to change the fact that you have HIV, you most certainly can determine how you deal with it. Loving yourself and accepting yourself are two things you can do that will help you now and in the long-term. And when you love yourself, it is easier to expect the best from yourself.

Remember that having HIV does not let you off the hook from taking care of yourself. Only you can do that. Also know that there are people who can assist you along the way. None of us can do this without a little help and there is a community willing and able to do so, including but not limited to doctors, nurses, psychologists/therapists, social workers, case managers, support groups, friends, and family. The rest is up to you. Be well.

2008 Long Beach Pride Photos



C.A.R.E. CLINIC

562.624.4999

Monday–Friday 8:30am–12:00noon 1:15pm–4:30pm

LAB HOURS

Monday–Friday 8:30am–11:30am 1:15pm–3:30pm

Clinic and Lab are closed on the 2nd Wednesday and the 1st Thursday of the month from 8:30am until 9:30am for Staff Meetings.

Remember to bring your insurance card every time you have lab work done.

C.A.R.E. PROGRAM OFFICES

562.624.4900

Monday–Friday 8:30am–12:00noon 1:15pm–4:30pm

Program offices are closed on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 8:30am until 1:15pm for Staff Meetings.

C.A.R.E. DENTAL CLINIC

562.624.4949

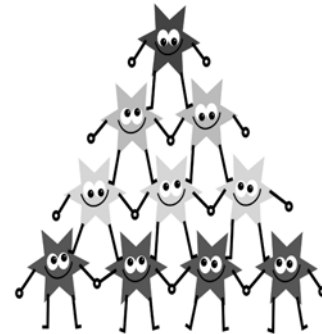
Monday–Friday 8:00am–12:00noon 1:00pm–4:30pm

Dental Clinic is closed on the 2nd Wednesday of the month from 8:00am until 10:00am for Staff Meetings.

www.careprogram.org



FOCUS **R**EACH OUT **E**MPOWER **S**UPPORT **H**OPE



An educational & support network for individuals newly diagnosed with HIV

Meets every 3rd Wednesday of each month at
the St. Mary Medical Center
John Parr Health Enhancement Building
6:00 - 7:30PM

For more information contact Ron Yolo, RN at
(562) 624-4945