

Red Matters

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THE NEWSLETTER OF AIDS CALGARY AWARENESS ASSOCIATION

August 2010

Announcing new GIPA program

The greater involvement of people living with HIV, otherwise known as GIPA, is a principle embraced by AIDS Calgary.

GIPA encourages people living with HIV/AIDS to get involved in their communities in ways they find meaningful. AIDS Calgary has always strongly encouraged people living with HIV/AIDS to apply for employment and volunteer opportunities with the agency. Now we are pleased to announce a new GIPA program that provides even more ways to get involved.

If you are living with HIV/AIDS and want to get involved in the work that AIDS Calgary does, we have some exciting opportunities to share with you. Our commitment to GIPA principles recognizes your expertise and the value of your time. Our GIPA program offers several opportunities that will have monetary compensation.

Do you like to cook?

We hold a lunch every second Friday for AIDS Calgary clients, and we are seeking cooks to shop for, prepare and serve lunches.

Do you like to organize events?

We are looking for people to plan and execute social events for people living with HIV/AIDS in our community.

Do you like to educate and present?

We are looking for people living with HIV/AIDS to share their stories with youth, health care workers, and the general public.

Do you like to write?

You could be a guest blogger or write an article for other communication materials.

We are fully committed to training, mentoring and providing capacity building to interested people. We want you to feel engaged in your community and have the opportunity to become a leader if that is something you desire.

We are open to your feedback! If you have any other ideas for the GIPA program, please bring them to Roseline Carter, Team Leader of Community Strategies.

Our work cannot be done without meaningful involvement of the people who have lived experiences of HIV/AIDS. Without you, our work is not complete; we need to be doing this work with you, not for you, and certainly not without you.

For more information please contact Roseline at rcarter@aidscalgary.org or by phone at 403-508-2500.

EVENTS CALENDAR

Core Training

August 11, September 18 Time: 9:00am - 4:00pm. Location: AIDS Calgary Training Room

Increase your knowledge and understanding of HIV/AIDS in this free workshop. Topics covered include: safer sex & HIV/AIDS, living with HIV/AIDS and challenging stereotypes. To register, call 403-508-2500 or email info@aidscalgary.org.

Walk Kick Off Party

August 19 Time: 6:00 - 8:00pm. Location: South Calgary Community Association, 3130 - 16 Street SW

Celebrate the end of the Volunteer Challenge and help us kick off the 2010 Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life.

Strobelite Productions Benefit

August 21 Location: The Marquee Room, 612 - 8 Avenue SW

Third-party fundraiser featuring Jesse Dolan, Goldstar and Fleur. For more info: strobeliteproductions.com

Live, Laugh, Love Fundraising Gala

August 21 Location: Arrata Opera Centre, 1315 - 7 Street SW

Third-party fundraiser for Live, Laugh, Love AIDS Walk Team featuring performances by The Lovebullies and The Garter Girls Burly-Q Revue. For more info: liveaughloveevent.com

2010 Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life

September 12 Time: Registration 10:00am, Walk 12:00pm Location: Eau Claire Market

All funds raised at this event support HIV/AIDS programs and services in the Calgary area. Register at aidscalgary.org. AIDS Calgary offers a wide variety of support, education, outreach, and prevention programs to people at risk for, affected by, and living with HIV/AIDS.

Team AIDS Calgary fundraising events

Each year, staff at AIDS Calgary form a walk team to participate in the Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life. 2010 is no exception and this year we are hosting a few fundraising events to raise money for our Walk team. Please drop by and make your contribution to the 2010 Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life!

Stampedeers BBQ – August 9, 2:30 – 6:30pm, Location: Local 522, 522 – 6 Avenue SW. Meet members of the Calgary Stampedeers and buy a burger and pop for a minimum donation of \$10.

Bake Sale – August 16, 10:00am – 2:30pm, Location: Sheldon Chumir Centre, 1213 – 4 Street SW. Stop by to purchase some delicious home-baked goods!

An ounce of prevention...

As you would expect, a great deal of medical information about HIV hits my inbox every day. One frequent theme of late is "treatment as prevention". The theory is that by treating as many people as possible who are known to have HIV infection, we can potentially reduce the forward transmission of new infections. Having an undetectable HIV viral load in blood decreases but does not eliminate the risk of transmission. Condom use and clean needle use seem like old news, but are proven tools in the fight against HIV.

Another common topic is the continuing growth in numbers of new HIV infections in all populations. Given that each new Canadian infection costs the healthcare system a minimum of \$34 Million, it's not only a great hardship on a personal level but is also a great strain on healthcare resources. And as I've mentioned, it's generally preventable if people are able to make safe decisions that help protect themselves.

This information confirms for me daily that the work done by the fine staff and volunteers

of AIDS Calgary Awareness Association continues to be so important. Our involvement in education, provision of harm-reduction supplies (condoms, lube, and in our Medicine Hat location needles as well), connecting clients to HIV medical care and generally providing support (emotional, informational, referral, and in some cases financial) is so core to the health and well-being of all citizens in each of our locations of service.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I thank our staff, volunteers, donors, funders

and clients for boldly facing the challenges faced by our communities, particularly during our expansion into new regions in Alberta. You are doing the right job, and doing it well! I deeply hope for the day when the cure is discovered... but in the meantime, AIDS Calgary Awareness Association is surely worth a pound of cure, if not more!

In good health,

Jeff Kapler

Chair, Board of Directors

AIDS Calgary Awareness Association

HIV/AIDS research news

US researchers have discovered two powerful antibodies that neutralize more than 90% of all known strains of the HIV virus in the lab. This finding could lead to the production of new HIV treatments and/or a vaccine.

Who is doing the research?

A National Institute of Health led team of virologists

When was it discovered?

The research was published in the July 8, 2010 online issue of the journal Science.

Why is this groundbreaking?

Refined molecular tools were able to pinpoint a vulnerable spot on the HIV virus. One of the most difficult aspects of HIV vaccine research is the ability of the virus to rapidly mutate. The weak spot that has been identified occurs in a position on the virus that doesn't mutate as much.

Three antibodies have been identified that are able to bind to the virus at this

weak spot, or "site of vulnerability". These antibodies currently appear in approximately 10% of all people currently living with HIV. The antibodies were able to neutralize more than 90% of known strains of HIV virus in the lab.

Researchers will be conducting further tests on the antibodies. One stream of testing will focus on using the antibodies as a possible treatment for people living with HIV. Some research into the efficacy of the antibodies in a microbicide as a preventative measure against HIV will be explored.

Testing will also explore the possibility of creating an HIV vaccine. Similar to the way the polio vaccine was created, researchers will seek a way to prompt the human body into creating the antibodies that could effectively fight off the HIV virus.

How long until treatment is available?

Researchers will make no firm predictions as to how long it will be until new HIV treatments and/or a

vaccine may be available based on the results of this research.

For more on this study:

Rational Design of Envelope Identifies Broadly Neutralizing Human Monoclonal Antibodies to HIV-1 - Science
Antibody finding may help in quest for AIDS vaccine - The Calgary Herald

Advance in quest for HIV vaccine - The Wall Street Journal

Reprinted from The A Word. For article links, visit <http://aidscalgary.blogspot.com>.

News Brief

Canadian HIV vaccine initiative

The Canadian government has launched an initiative in the fight against HIV. The Research and Development Alliance is meant to position Canada as a leader in the development of a safe, effective, affordable and globally accessible HIV vaccine. The alliance will help researchers coordinate efforts to get vaccines into internationally recognized clinical trials. This initiative is a joint venture between Canada and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Canada has recently come under criticism for not doing enough in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

View the complete article at www.calgaryherald.com

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