



The Pitt Men's Study

news and notes

fall 2008

YOUR DATA: MACS STUDY FINDS THAT HIV DRUGS MAY REDUCE RISK FOR CORONARY ARTEROSCLEROSIS

Note: In the interest of keeping our clients informed of the results of the data they provide to us, we'll be periodically highlighting published papers in this space. What follows is a press release sent out by UPMC to major media outlets.



Antiretroviral drugs for HIV do not increase the risk for coronary atherosclerosis, a central risk factor for heart disease, according to a study led by the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health published in the Aug.

8 issue of the journal *AIDS*. The results further suggest that antiretroviral therapy may offer men with HIV some protection against atherosclerosis – hardening of the arteries, caused in part by high levels of cholesterol, smoking and other lifestyle factors.

The study, part of the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS) initiated in 1983, measured levels of coronary artery calcification (CAC) in nearly 950 HIV-positive and HIV-negative men by CT scanning completed between 2004 and 2006. Controlling for traditional atherosclerosis risk factors such as age, family history,

smoking and blood pressure, the study team found that CAC scores were almost 60 percent lower in HIV-positive men who received highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) for more than eight years compared to HIV-negative men.

HAART, a course of treatment that involves the combination of three or more antiretrovirals, has been associated with an increase in cholesterol and other factors associated with atherosclerosis, leading some to question whether long-term use increases the risk of heart attack.

“When we first prescribed highly active antiretroviral therapy for HIV in 1995, we were concerned about how these drugs changed lipid levels in patients and whether they would increase atherosclerosis and ultimately lead to serious heart disease,” said Lawrence Kingsley, PhD, study lead author and associate professor, Departments of Infectious Diseases and Microbiology and Epidemiology, University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. “While some studies have found an association between these antiretroviral treatments and increased risk of cardiovascular disease, we believe our findings should reassure clinicians that using antiretroviral therapy over time does not appear to put patients at greater risk for coronary atherosclerosis and may, in fact, be more beneficial than we had initially thought.”

The study also found that for both HIV-positive and HIV-negative men, older age was most strongly associated with the presence of coronary atherosclerosis. Smoking, lipid abnormalities and family history also played a role.

“This was not surprising since these are the major risk factors for atherosclerosis in the general population,” said Dr. Kingsley. “The purpose of our study, however, was to investigate whether long-term HAART usage was a major risk factor.”

Continued on page 3

THE PITT MEN'S STUDY

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NEWS AND NOTES is published by the Pitt Men's Study. All information and opinions are the sole responsibility of the the Study and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the University of Pittsburgh or the National Institutes of Health.

remembering Randy

In Remembrance of Long-Time Civil Rights Activist and Friend to the PMS Randal G. Forrester, Dec. 13, 1947 - April 23, 2008

By Ray Yeo



Most of us in the community knew him simply as Randy. His name carried a fair amount of notoriety. The local media turned to him for an interview whenever LGBT civil rights were an issue. He co-founded Persad Center in the early 1970's - one of only a few counseling centers for sexual minorities - with his long time partner, Jim Huggins. He founded the Lambda Foundation in the early 1980's, which has been responsible for funding endless LGBT organizations, HIV/AIDS services, and individuals in and around Pittsburgh.

The Pitt Men's Study turned to Randy in 1984 when it came time to organize the gay community around recruitment for the study. After getting the ball rolling, Randy then recommended Dr. Silvestre for the position—Randy had too much on his own plate to take up the task full-time. Randy recounted the early days of the PMS as part of an oral history project. In those early days of the epidemic, it was Randy who insisted participants in the study remain anonymous, and that the person who would eventually handle the recruiting should also be gay.

Randy's obituary in the April 25th edition of the local Post Gazette sums up his long list of accomplishments, and gives credit to his dedication to community activism and civil rights. But on a more personal note, Dr. Mark Friedman, a researcher at the University of Pittsburgh studying LGBT youth, had this to say: "I remember when a representative of Bishop Donald Wuerl requested a meeting with Randy. I was there, as Persad's Director of Development. The representative wanted to build a relationship with Persad. Randy told him, politely but firmly, that the Bishop's and the Church's positions on condoms lead to the transmission of HIV and to death, that their position on homosexuals lead to personal anguish among so many; that these positions were incompatible with the mission of Persad Center and, as a result, a relationship between the two would not be possible. Randy was that direct," Friedman concluded, "And of course, so on-target."

When asked about their personal relationship, Friedman went on to say: "Randy was a mentor to me, in addition to being a good friend. He helped teach me the importance of community activism. He was a tireless advocate for gay civil rights when the general population considered homosexuality on par with criminal behavior. Randy helped change that. We may have a long way to go in terms of civil rights, but it was Randy who laid the groundwork in southwestern Pennsylvania."

Save the Dates:

Miss Tri-State All-Star Pageant '08



Sunday,
October 19, 2008
7:30 PM

Holiday Inn - North Hills
4859 McKnight Road; Pittsburgh, PA
(Near Ross Park Mall)

Cash Bar

Contestant's application is now on-line:
www.kierradarshell.com

Tickets:

\$25.00 Advance \$30.00 Door

World AIDS Day 2008



Monday,
December 1, 2008
7:30 PM

Pittsburgh will commemorate this event with the 21st annual World AIDS Day service sponsored by the Pitt Men's Study.

The non-denominational, multi-religious service will take place at **Heinz Chapel** (located on Bellefield Ave next to the Cathedral) on the University of Pittsburgh campus in Oakland.

For more information, contact

WorldAIDSdayPgh@stophiv.pitt.edu

NEW PMS MEDICAL DIRECTOR CREATES ANAL DYSPLASIA CLINIC

By Ray Yeo

Dr. Ross Cranston was recruited to Pittsburgh in 2007 to create an Anal Dysplasia Clinic at the Pittsburgh AIDS Center for Treatment (PACT). The focus of the clinic, which is also open to non-PACT patients, is to address the high incidence of human papillomavirus (HPV or wart virus). HPV has been associated with anal cancer in gay men - particularly those living with HIV.

“As gay men, we run the risk of serious health issues because we don’t pay enough attention to our butts.” Dr. Cranston states. “So, one of my goals is to promote an ‘anal agenda’ that increases awareness of the medical conditions gay men are more likely to experience.” Putting the issue into perspective, he adds: “Anal health has yet to emerge as an area to which it is deemed appropriate to direct our attention. As a result, gay men in particular are unaware of their increased risk of many anal diagnoses including those related to sex or sexually transmitted infections, such as the development of anal cancer.”

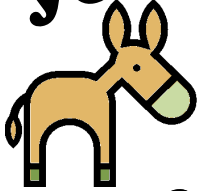
Patients with an abnormal anal cytology (a test of anal cells that is used to detect abnormalities) are referred to Dr. Cranston for high-resolution anoscopy (HRA). This office procedure involves examining the anal canal using magnification. If there is evidence of high-grade dysplasia – the precursor to anal cancer – a bi-

HIV MEDS MAY REDUCE HEART RISK

Continued from page 1

“These results could be due, in part, to lower lipid values of HIV infected men prior to beginning antiretroviral therapy and high use of lipid-lowering drugs. The key is that controlling risk factors for atherosclerosis should be a priority,” added Lewis Kuller, MD, Dr.P.H, study co-author and professor of epidemiology, University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health.

Dr. Kingsley concluded, “What remains to be determined is whether use of the newest antiretroviral therapies confers an even better outcome and whether lipid-lowering therapies will further improve cardiovascular risk in the HIV-infected population. Our future research will address these questions.”

**Get your

checked!**

Did you know that gay and bisexual men have the highest risk of developing anal cancer?

Screening, follow-up and treatment is available at the **Anal Dysplasia Clinic** located within the Pittsburgh Treatment Evaluation Unit (PTEU)/Pittsburgh AIDS Center for Treatment (PACT) in Oakland.

Call **412.647.0996** to set up an appointment.

opsy may be performed. If high-grade dysplasia is confirmed, Dr. Cranston can then remove the lesion in order to prevent its potential progression to cancer.

“We are currently diagnosing about one case of anal cancer every 2 weeks,” says Dr. Cranston, “which is why I suggest that gay men who are HIV-positive talk to their clinician about anal dysplasia screening and have an annual anal Pap smear.” Although there are no national screening guidelines, Dr. Cranston notes, it is also suggested that HIV-negative men over 40 get tested every two to three years.

Dr. Cranston is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Infectious Disease and the Medical Director of the Pitt Men’s Study. He began his studies at the University of Edinburgh before moving to London, where he completed a fellowship in HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infection. He moved to the U.S. to conduct doctoral research at the University of California—San Francisco and then spent five years working at the UCLA Center for AIDS Research and Education in Los Angeles, where he established and ran the UCLA Anal Dysplasia Clinic. He moved to Pittsburgh in September 2007 with his partner of 11 years, Ian McGowan, who is also employed by the University as a Professor in the School of Medicine, and is Co-Principal Investigator of the Pittsburgh-based Microbicide Trials Network.

For more information about the anal dysplasia clinic, you can call 412-647-0996.

25th anniversary

25 YEARS...

Twenty-five years ago this Fall, the University of Pittsburgh made history when the National Institutes of Health selected a proposal submitted by Charles R. Rinaldo Jr PhD to become part of the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS). Like the disease itself, AIDS research was just emerging in the Fall of 1983. The scientific and medical community knew little about this mysterious disease, but what they did know painted a troubling picture. What better way to confirm or refute existing hypotheses about the disease than the surveillance of a large, national cohort of at-risk individuals. Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore), Northwestern University (Chicago), and UCLA (Los Angeles) joined the University as research sites in this project. Over the past quarter century the MACS as a group and these member institutions individually became a driving national force in HIV/AIDS research.



We are gearing up to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Pitt Men's Study with a special event for all of our MACS study men in the Spring of 2009. Watch this space and our website (<http://www.stophiv.com/pms>) for details.

In the meantime, our men are welcome to attend a half-day lecture event that will look at the history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the research role of the Pitt MACS. Three speakers have been confirmed for the event: Sten Vermund, national HIV researcher, Phil Parr, prominent community advocate, and Charles R. Rinaldo, principal investigator of the Pitt MACS. The event will take place on Monday, November 3, 2008 from 8am to 11:30am in A115 Crabtree Hall, 130 DeSoto Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15261.

SEND US YOUR MEMORIES!



Over the past 25 years, those of us involved with the Pitt Men's Study have seen our fair share of history. We've experienced the twists and turns of the AIDS epidemic first hand. In commemoration of our extraordinary efforts—particularly among the study's volunteers—the staff of the Pitt Men's Study would like you to share your memories with us by putting them in writing.

Your letters will be kept on file, as part of the Study's Oral History Project, and may be published on the Study's website and in a special upcoming newsletter in commemoration of our 25th anniversary. Memories can pertain to clinic visits, reactions to the AIDS crisis, or about the loss of a friend or family member. Whatever your memories are, we'd like to make them part of our community's history.

You can send your letters electronically to pms@stophiv.pitt.edu, or by mail to the **Pitt Men's Study, P.O. Box 7319, Pittsburgh, PA15213**. In order to maintain the Study's strict confidentiality, your letter should contain only your first name, last initial and your study identification number. All materials sent to the Pitt Men's Study will become the property of the study and cannot be returned.

Corner

Clinic

NEW HOURS

We've changed our clinic hours and will no longer be taking appointments on Tuesday evenings. Through the research of our intrepid clinic coordinator Bill Buchanan, we found that we were using a small percentage of our evening appointments. We will still be taking evening appointments on Thursdays. The hours for available appointments are as follows:

Tue	10am – 2pm
Wed	10am – 1pm
Thur	12pm – 6pm
Fri	10am – 11am
Sat	9am – 1pm

SYPHILIS - LET US TEST YOU!

Syphilis rates continue to rise. Be sure to ask for a syphilis test at your next appointment; it consists of drawing a small amount of extra blood. Thanks to the assistance of the Allegheny County Health Department, we can now offer treatment for syphilis right in the clinic. For more info call 412-624-2008