

IN THIS ISSUE

1
Medicare Part D
 Our Client Advisory Panel
 Outreach & Other New Programs

2
 A Little Advice
 Ask Dr. Troia
 AIDS is so Limiting

3
 The Importance of Health
 Education
 Dates to Remember

4
 Schedule of Events
 Why I Work at CARES

Medicare Part D Open Enrollment

If you have Medicare Part D, you have until the end of December to make any changes in your prescription Plan. See your Case Manager if you need assistance.

Our Client Advisory Panel

At our November Client Advisory Panel meeting, which meets monthly and makes recommendations to CARES management, we were visited by a group of clients and providers from Fresno. Apparently the fame of our group has spread since the visitors wanted to know how to make their group as effective as ours.

Outreach & Other New Programs

By Janet Parker

CARES has been fortunate to receive funding for several new programs. These new programs will expand and improve our outreach, education and prevention activities. A new manager has been hired to head up this group. Her name is Amanda Gibson Chi, MSW. Amanda is joined by other new staff including Carrie Gray and Kay Vettenburg who will work on the Positive Changes program. Ana Ramirez comes aboard to do outreach and Alan Swinney will provide HIV testing. Here is a summary of the new activities at CARES.

Positive Changes is a program to help people change their behavior around risky behavior. You can work with one of the counselors to help develop a plan to decrease or eliminate behavior that can spread HIV. It's a way for you to make the changes you want in life and keep yourself and others safe.

Our **Outreach** efforts will be much more visible in 2008. We're going to make a special effort to make contact with people in the Hispanic

community, with youth and with African American women. We'll be doing our best to reach people who may need CARES services as well as try to get people back in care.

And finally, we'll be offering **Rapid Testing for HIV** for anyone who wants test results in twenty minutes. We're especially interested in testing people that you may have had contact with. There will be more information about this program in the next few months.

In the photo below are Carrie, Ana, Kay and Amanda.



Ask Dr. Troia

A Little Advice

To make your health care the best it can be, here are a few tips:

1. Keep your appointments.
2. Come 15 minutes early to check in.
3. Call at least 24 hours in advance to cancel or reschedule.
4. Courtesy always pays off.
5. If you feel sick, call the triage nurse at 914-6215.
6. If you feel really sick, call 911.

What is MRSA & how can I avoid becoming infected. Do I need to take extra precautions being HIV+?

MRSA is a type of staph bacteria that has developed resistance to penicillin and closely related antibiotics. MRSA is an acronym meaning “Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus”, with methicillin being one type of penicillin and the S. aureus part being the scientific name for the specific staph bacteria.

Staph bacteria have been around for thousands of years, and can cause problems for anyone, ranging from a minor skin boil all the way to a life-threatening blood infection. At first, MRSA was primarily a problem of very ill individuals in the hospital, where it was able to thrive because of antibiotic use. However, the bacterium has now become common enough that it can be found anywhere, and not just in the hospital. When the bacterium is picked up outside of the hospital, we called it community-acquired, or CA-MRSA.

The other reason CA-MRSA has become an issue is that the bacteria seems to have gained genes that allow it to be more aggressive than prior Staph bacteria. CA-MRSA can affect anyone, not just PLWHA, but individuals with HIV appear to be at increased risk.

Because the bacteria are so common in the community, it may not be possible to completely avoid it, but the following precautions can help minimize the risk. Good hygiene, particularly washing hands frequently or using a hand sanitizer when in contact with other people, as well as avoiding sharing personal care items such as towels, razors, or soap bars. Close body shaving may irritate the skin and increase the risk of infection. If removal of hair is desired, using a clipper may be less likely to cause skin irritation. Because the bacteria are transmitted by close body contact, significant others or other close contacts of PLWHA should

seek prompt medical attention if they are having a skin infection.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has received inquiries concerning Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) and has published two Fact Sheets, which you may want to review. They can be obtained at the following websites:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca.html Community-Associated MRSA Information for the Public.
<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools> Questions and Answers about MRSA in Schools

AIDS is so limited

It cannot cripple love
 It cannot shatter hope
 It cannot corrode faith
 It cannot eat away peace
 It cannot destroy confidence
 It cannot kill friendships
 It cannot shut out memories
 It cannot silence courage
 It cannot reduce eternal life
 It cannot quench the spirit
 It cannot lessen the power of the resurrection

For today we have a mighty army against AIDS: doctors, researchers, medications, medical staff, case managers, counselors, therapists, nutritionists, and many many friends. We are no longer alone in this battle against you.

We are a mighty force to be reckoned with. So I say today, to you AIDS, Bring it on. We are afraid no more. We are the survivors of a once losing battle and now our victory is in sight. You took many of us a long the way but that just made us stronger: stronger in mind, in body and in spirit. So we march together hand in hand to victory.

The world once knew you as the angel of death but one day we will know you as just a memory, just a story to be told to future generations.

May you rest in peace.

- Michael J.

The Importance of Health Education

An interview with Guillermo Acuna



As Health Educator at CARES, what do you think should be the ultimate educational goal for the client?

The word education comes from the Latin word “educere”, which means “to bring out”. Thus the ultimate goal of education is to empower the client; it is to tap the reservoir of energy and strength that lies within each person.

What is the single most important fact you would “relay” to the general population of HIV Positive People? And when should we implement your professional advice?

The most important single message is that they are not “AIDS victims”. HIV does not define who they are. The definition of who they are comes from within. That is what allows people to take control of, and to direct their lives. What is usually understood by HIV education may amount to a simple defensive posture, which in the long run is negative and “dis-empowering”. For example, when we simply tell people to use condoms and clean their needles, it’s just a band-aid, if it does not simultaneously require a change in their outlook on life. Once they realize that they have power over their behavior, they can also assume ownership of what they do.

This sounds nice, but how can you empower people?

To begin with, all our educational activities are geared to empower our clients. We start with a “New Client Orientation” - after Intake - where we discuss HIV treatments, what we expect from the new clients and what services CARES offers. This enables the new client to navigate through the variety of services available. “Powerful Living” focuses precisely on how to take control of our lives through setting up goals, “L.I.F.E. Program”® (Learning Immune Function Enhancement) is a mind-body health counseling and peer support program designed to boost the immune system, reduce risk behavior and enhance adherence to health routines. We offer HIV antibody testing to partners/significant others of our clients, thus reinforcing responsible relationships. “Lunch & Learn” focuses on a specific topic of importance to our clients and “HIV Medical Update” brings up the latest in new treatments and – something that people should take advantage of more often – one-on-one sessions with me. And these are only some of the educational activities we offer.

Explain why Health Education should be vitally important to the HIV positive person and what some of the consequences are when we are not actively responsible regarding our diagnosis.

Health education – as defined earlier – is vitally important because it enables one to move away from a single focus overwhelming one’s life, be it HIV, addiction, or another affliction, to a wider view of oneself as a whole person endowed with the capability to manage one’s life. This places HIV disease in perspective as only one of the issues one needs to handle, particularly now that available treatments allow HIV infected persons to lead a “normal life”. It is this shift in outlook that enables one to gain control of one’s life. It is this shift in outlook that allows one to see life in a different light enabling one to be proactive in getting support from Doctors, Nurses, Therapists, Case Managers, Dietitian, Health Educator, etc. But empowerment also requires that we assume responsibility for our outlook and actions, if we don’t, several consequences will follow. In relation to oneself, it could be a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, rage or despair. In relation to others, it could be dysfunctional relationships, inability to form partnerships of any type, or spreading HIV.

Guillermo Acuna is the Health Educator at CARES. He is available for individual appointments for you to discuss any of the concerns you may have about HIV. Give Guillermo a call at 914-6244.

Important Dates
for You to
Remember

Remember that
you have to
re-apply for
ADAP each year-
at your birthday.

CARES is
required to do a
review of your
eligibility and an
evaluation to
make sure you’re
getting all the
care you’re
entitled to twice
each year.
We’ll remind you
when you’re due
for a review. It
doesn’t take
more than 15 or
20 minutes.

Transforming lives through AIDS/HIV care, research and community awareness.

Important Information

CARES will close at 4pm on December 24
Closed all day December 25

Close at 4pm on December 31
Closed all day January 1

Do you wonder what is happening in HIV/AIDS Research at CARES?

An update / presentation is being planned for after the Holidays. To attend, just send Dave Casey your preferred contact information (e.g.- Email or Snail Mail Address) and he will forward it to the coordinator.

Invitations will be sent out when the time/date/location details are solidified.

Send an email or call (916)383-8022 and leave a message.

How Do You Want to Get this Newsletter?

Let us know how you'd like to get your copy of this newsletter.

Cut this form out and give it to reception:

_____ **Please mail it to me at:**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

_____ **Or send it to my email at address at:**

_____ **Or I'll just pick it up at CARES.**

Why I Work at CARES

-by Pamela Powell

Working at CARES gives me the opportunity to express my passion for people with HIV and for people who are struggling with addiction. My work provides two avenues for expressing my personal commitment: as a drug and alcohol counselor and as a long distance bike rider.

I've been at CARES for over 6 years as an alcohol and drug counselor. I work with people individually as well as lead several groups each week. I consider my work to be a great privilege; people give me the honor of sharing their struggle with addiction. To be trusted at such a vulnerable time is a humbling experience. That trust takes a great deal of courage and I am grateful that another person gives me that confidence. At the same time, sharing in someone's struggle helps me grow as a professional and as a compassionate person. The experience has been priceless and the journey worth traveling.

I decided to become an alcohol and drug counselor after working as an outreach worker at Harm Reduction Services. At the same time I worked for Breaking Barriers providing transportation and companionship. I felt drawn to be able to do more for people and CARES has given me that opportunity. Since then I have been passionately pursuing ways to be involved

and to be of service to people living with HIV/AIDS. I'm able to be part of a diverse team of people who can offer such a wide variety of assistance. People here have big hearts and are genuine and authentic. The environment has helped me thrive as well. I've been the CARES Employee of the Year and was honored by the Sunburst Project as the Woman Provider of the Year for my skills and abilities.

My other passion is riding my bike for a cause. Earlier this year I rode in a "short" ride for the MS Society. It was 140 miles. In May of next year I'm going to ride in the NorCal AIDs Challenge. It's a 365 mile ride that takes four days to complete. I'm very excited about it. Riding for such a good cause is very rewarding to me. To practice for long distances, I sometimes ride my bike to work, which is a 32 mile round trip. I love it.

Along with the ride next year, I'm looking forward to continuing to work toward a bachelor's degree and eventually a Master's in Social Work. I enjoy being in school and while it takes longer when you work full-time, it's worth the effort. I'm also looking forward to all the new programs that are being offered at CARES. It's great to see the new programs make such a difference in people's lives. I'll continue being involved with the LIFE program and other new services that are being offered. Eventually I'd like to help design new programs. I think that would be very interesting.