



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Purchase your tickets now for our upcoming Drive-Thru BBQ event on May 7th! It's the only drive-through service in SLO City!
- Learn about Füs, the ASN's evolving HIV-prevention program!

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The Network

APRIL 2014

2

Why You Should Care About the HCV Epidemic

By Lili Gevorkian

The Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) has turned into a pressing public health issue. With no known vaccine to prevent the disease, HCV is spreading rapidly.

Although it is the most common blood-borne viral infection and three times more prevalent than HIV, many are unaware of the devastating impact of this disease.

HCV often results in severe health complications, such as fibrosis, cirrhosis, advanced liver disease, even cancer if left untreated.

Due to its nature, many HCV-infected people do not know they have contracted the disease.

Symptoms may not appear for ten

or twenty years, making early intervention critical.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

currently recommends adults born 1945-1965 be tested for HCV. For reasons currently unknown, Baby Boomers are five times more likely to have contracted the virus.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) coupled with recent breakthroughs in HCV treatments make this junction

more hopeful than ever. New treatments are more effective and tolerable to sustain over a shorter duration.

BORN 1945-1965?
CDC RECOMMENDS
YOU GET A BLOOD TEST
FOR HEPATITIS C

MORE THAN 3 MILLION AMERICANS HAVE CHRONIC HEPATITIS C

UP TO 75% DON'T KNOW IT

Interferon-free regimens also allow for recovery with few or no severe side effects. The benefits of treating patients who are in the early stages of the disease is endless. Living with HCV has tremendous emotional, financial, and physical costs.

HCV costs \$30 billion dollars in annual medical costs and is expected to triple by 2030 unless a drastic change is seen.

Awareness and education are key to halting the spread of this disease. Ask your friends and loved ones to get tested today!

Drive-Thru BBQ Extravaganza!

Join us May 7th for our upcoming fundraiser, starring delicious BBQ and all the fixins from Old San Luis BBQ, one of SLO's premier BBQ establishments.

Meals include: 1/2 or whole BBQ tri-tip, 2 or 4 fresh roasted ears of corn, BBQ beans, and garlic bread!

Tickets are available on our website, www.asn.org, or contact us at 805-781-3660 for more info!

BUY FAMILY BBQ DINNERS AND SUPPORT LOCAL HEP C AND AIDS SERVICES

BBQ FUNDRAISER / May 7, 2014

\$40 for 4 | \$20 for 2

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, SLO
 2075 JOHNSON AVE
 DRIVE THROUGH OPEN 3-7 pm
 TRI-TIP, BEANS, CORN, FRENCH BREAD

AIDS-SUPPORT NETWORK SLO HEP C PROJECT

OLD SAN LUIS BBQ IS

FOR ONLINE TICKETS AND MORE INFORMATION VISIT: WWW.ASN.ORG OR WWW.SLOHEPC.ORG

WWW.OLDSANLUISSLO.COM

Juan Carlos Riascos: *En El Laberinto de la Esperanza*

On Thursday, March 13th, the ASN was proud to welcome Juan Carlos Riascos, author and father, as a presenter for our first Lunch Forum of 2014!

Riascos' book, *En El Laberinto de la Esperanza: Memorias de Una Familia Seropositiva (In the Labyrinth of Hope: Memoirs of an HIV-Positive Family)*, is a true testimony of faith, love, and hope. *El Laberinto* is a memoir chronicling the loss of his wife to AIDS and the challenges of being

HIV+ himself while raising a daughter born with the disease.

Riascos is a nationally recognized health educator, advocate, published author, and lecturer. He speaks on a number of health-related issues, such as educating and providing best practices for HIV/AIDS healthcare service providers.

He also educates and empowers people infected or affected directly by HIV/AIDS to live a full, healthy and productive life through health

education and a better understanding of their condition.

Riascos visited the ASN on Thursday as an honored guest. Titled "Taking Control and Living with HIV," Riascos shared his both tragic and inspiring personal story with clients and staff at the ASN.

After telling his story, everyone had the opportunity to talk. And, of course, Riascos shared pictures of his beautiful daughter and gushed over the near completion of her bachelors degree.



Riascos (center) in 2012, pictured with his wife, Margarita (left), and his daughter, Luciana (right)

"One in 6 people in the United States who have HIV do not know they are infected."

HIV Testing FAQ: Who should get tested?

Who should get tested?

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested at least once as part of routine health care. One in 6 people in the United States who have HIV do not know they are infected.

If you answer yes to any of the following questions, you should definitely get an HIV test:

- Have you had unprotected sex since your last HIV test?
- Have you injected drugs and/or shared equipment with others?
- Have you had unprotected sex with someone who could answer yes to any of the above questions or someone whose history you don't know?

As a general rule, individuals with high-risk factors (i.e. IV-

drug users, men who have sex with men, engaging in unprotected sex) should get tested at least annually.

Where should I get tested?

The ASN offers free confidential HIV testing using oral swab rapid tests. Testing is offered Wednesdays: 1 - 4pm & Fridays: 11am - 3pm.

Call us today @ 805-781-3660 for more information!

24th Annual AIDS Update Symposium: A Riveting Success!

A crowd of over one hundred doctors, nurses, health care service providers, students, and community members attended this year's AIDS Update Symposium!

Attendees learned valuable information that will keep them on the forefront of caring for individuals living with

this HIV/AIDS and/or hepatitis C.

This year's focus was on the challenges facing an aging HIV population, and how to effectively care for and treat these individuals.

Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, as this year's presenters proved

to be gifted lecturers who were able to effectively present this crucial information to such a diverse audience.

We would like to thank both our presenters and those who attended for making the 24th Annual AIDS Update Symposium a rousing success!

We hope to see you there next year!



Symposium presenters Lawrence Mc Glynn, M.D. (2nd from left) & Wilson Ly, PharmD (far right) pose with enthusiastic attendees, including Dr. Penny Borenstein, SLO Public Health Director (far left).

FÜS: The Evolution of Fusion

By Derek Sisting

With HIV transmission rates up 22% from 2008 in gay males ages 13-24, there have been a flurry of editorials writing off the youth of America as selfish, uncaring, and too far removed from the early horrors of the epidemic.

Just shy of 25, I bridge both worlds. As a child I remember hushed voices whispering fearfully about “gay diseases.” Today, I see young men on gay dating apps advertising themselves “anything goes” or “HIV status: Don’t know/don’t care.”

Truvada, a pre-exposure (PreP) antiviral, decreases risk of HIV transmission up to 75% in the event of accidental or intentional exposure to the virus, essentially the “Gay Man’s Plan B.” It has shiny appeal, a tantalizing illusion of worry-free and uninhibited sex, regardless of side-effects or price.

This marks a crossroad in the growing debate between HIV treatment vs. prevention. HIV is no longer a “gay disease” but rather a preventable community issue that requires an innovative community solution.

As a result, Fusion’s longtime Coffee Night was restructured as Füs at Woodstock’s Pizza to meet the next challenges of HIV prevention locally. This is part of several new changes occurring at Fusion, the AIDS Support

Network, & the SLO Hep C Project.

Health experts have long expressed that HIV/AIDS was more than a disease among gay men, and recent studies reflect that reality. For example, according to the Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), low self-esteem due to social stigma contributes to the high HIV prevalence among trans* identified persons.

Füs departs from Fusion’s strict focus on the male gay community, in the acknowledgement that HIV transcends gender and orientation. There are several factors which contribute to the link between low self-esteem and HIV transmission.

Online and social media communities allow for individuals to rapidly connect with others and rapidly be rejected.

While social media creates an illusion of friendship, they are merely a collection of faces, lacking a tangible human touch. Prevention programs like Fusion draw their strength from these vital in-person connections and friendships created prior to society’s social media immersion.

Facing a strong cultural inward shift, Füs merges the online community with weekly open community gatherings. By fostering a presence both online and in person, Füs is a Millennial update, or Fusion 2.1.

Having worked closely with the Fusion program over the years, I am constantly amazed at the evolution of HIV, not only virologically, but socially. Prevention tools that were groundbreaking 5 years ago now fall on deaf ears and are shrugged off with a “been-there-done-that” eye roll.

It’s too easy to point the blame on threats like social media, dating apps, and other scourges of the Millennial culture. It seems as though even the youth have given up on themselves, as HIV prevention services evolve into HIV treatment services to meet the growing number of new infections.

Do we treat infections as they happen or do we focus our efforts on preventing them? However, at this crossroad we can take both routes--by preventing new transmissions with pills and condoms and emerging medicine/technology.

Like Füs, modern HIV-prevention efforts must embrace not only emerging medical technological advancements, but social advancements as well.

“Füs departs from Fusion’s strict focus on the male gay community, in the acknowledgement that HIV transcends gender and orientation.”

Building Repair Fund

The ASN is proud to offer housing assistance to our clients, including 2 housing complexes with a total of 13 units!

We would like to announce the creation of a special new funding opportunity dedicated to special projects that these units might require, such as the current unforeseen foundation repair in one of the complexes.

Remember, ALL MONEY DONATED TO THE ASN IS TAX DEDUCTABLE & REMAINS IN THIS COMMUNITY to help SLO County residents in their struggle with HIV/AIDS and/or Hep C.



The ASN/SLOHCP Food Pantry Needs Bags!

The Food Pantry is one of the ASN/SLOHCP’s most popular programs.

We are in need of bags so that food can be safely transported from the Pantry.

We can use any bags, plastic, paper, or re-useable!

To donate, just stop on by with your bags, or give us a call if you have any questions!

**You Can
Make a
Difference!**



The San Luis Obispo County AIDS Support Network remains the sole community-based, non-profit organization in this county that provides supportive services to residents living with HIV disease & AIDS, and their families and friends.

Mailing Address:
 P.O. Box 12158
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

Physical Address:
 1320 Nipomo St.
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

Phone: 805-781-3660
 800-491-9141
 Fax: 805-781-3664

The SLO Hep C Project is dedicated to meeting the needs of people living with hepatitis C and increasing public awareness through educational outreach in SLO County.

The agency strives to improve the quality of life and independence of its clients by providing support on an individual basis.

Lean more at ASN.org & SLOHepC.org

Upcoming Events & Opportunities!

We are proud to offer our community a wide variety of **volunteer opportunities**. You're sure to find one that's perfect for you!

Front Desk

Volunteer:

Our front desk volunteers are the back bone of the office. They direct phone calls, greet incoming clients, help with distributing food from our pantry, and overall help to keep us sane! We love, LOVE, our front desk volunteers!

Direct Client Services:

There is always a need for a variety of services, including companionship, meal delivery & preparation, housekeeping, gardening, transportation for medical visits or groceries, pet care, and other invaluable services.

Contact us for more details!



Upcoming Events:

Drive-Thru BBQ Fundraiser!

May 7th, 2014

Drive Thru Open: 3 pm - 7 pm
 First Baptist Church, SLO
 2075 Johnson Avenue
 San Luis Obispo, CA

The Only Drive-Thru in SLO City!

Get Your Tickets Now!:

www.ASN.org

\$40 Ticket Includes:

- A Whole Tri-Tip!
- 4 Ears of Roasted Corn
- BBQ Beans
- Garlic Bread

\$20 Ticket Includes:

- A Half Tri-Tip!
- 2 Ears of Roasted Corn
- BBQ Beans
- Garlic Bread

For more information, visit www.ASN.org