



Dr. David Metzger

## Welcome to the new *CAB News*. The voice of the Community Advisory Board.

Welcome to the first volume of the new *CAB News*--the voice of the Community Advisory Board for University of Pennsylvania's Project RAP. Over the last 10 years the Community

Advisory Board has grown and changed along with Project RAP. As we begin projects as part of the International HIV Prevention Trials Network (HTPN), we are inaugurating a revised and expanded newsletter to meet the needs of the Community Advisory Board and the community in general. We hope that this newsletter will provide important information on the various research studies undertaken by Project RAP, as well as general information about substance abuse and HIV research.

*CAB News* will also provide a forum for events in

the community and for community voices and concerns. We will look at the work and lives of those involved in research, treatment, and harm reduction. We encourage Community Advisory Board members to contribute ideas, articles, and stories to *CAB News*. The newsletter's new editor, Roseanne Scotti, is eager to accommodate new ideas and looks forward to working with the board to improve and expand the newsletter. Roseanne can be reached by phone at her

office in Building 3--(215) 823-4228. Comments and articles can also be sent Roseanne in the stamped, self-addressed envelopes that will be provided to CAB members to facilitate communication. In addition, mail can be left with Sheryl at the 5th and Girard Office to be forwarded to Roseanne.

We look forward to providing a lively and informative forum and we

hope you share our enthusiasm for this new venture.

Dr. David Metzger

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*"We look forward to providing a lively and informative forum."*

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### **Lawsuit filed in N.Y. on behalf of Needle Exchange users.**

Corrine Carey, formerly of Prevention Point Philadelphia, and now working for the Urban Justice Center in New York city has filed a lawsuit on behalf of an unidentified heroin user who was arrested for carrying syringes acquired at the Lower East Side needle exchange. The user was stopped by police, searched, and arrested in the West Village in the spring of 1999, despite the fact that he told police that he was enrolled and showed them his needle exchange card. The man was charged with possession of a hypodermic needle. He said that his needle exchange card was not returned and was cut up by police.

The New York District Attorney's office did not prosecute. The suit alleges that police often ignore the law and harass drug users carrying legal syringes. The New York user, who is seeking damages, said "They get a kick out of it. They say, 'You stupid junkie.' I know I'm stupid for shooting dope, but they just like to watch you get sick."

Supporters of syringe exchange say this case and a similar case in Connecticut will be a test of how such problems will be dealt with in the future.

Source: *The New York Times*



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# Substance P Study, directed by Dr. Wenzhe Ho, starts at RAP Office.



*The AIDS Memorial Quilt*

The Substance P Study, directed by Dr. Wenzhe Ho began recruitment at the RAP Office on January. Dr. Ho works in the Division of Immunologic and Infectious Diseases at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and has done research on the interaction of Substance P with opiodes.

The purpose of the Substance P study is to learn if drug use can affect the body's ability to fight HIV infection. Substance P is a chemical in the blood that some scientists have found may increase cells susceptibility to HIV

infection. The study will try to determine if drug use and stress lead to higher levels of substance P in the blood and therefore a greater risk of HIV infection.

The Substance P study will recruit 200 participants into four groups for the study. Each group will contain fifty participants. The groups will be: fifty HIV negative participants who are on methadone; fifty HIV positive participants who are on methadone; fifty HIV negative participants who are not using methadone or any other opioid; fifty HIV positive participants who are not using methadone or any other

opioid. It is estimated that 600 people will need to be screened to identify 200 eligible participants.

HIV positive, non-drug using participants will be recruited from local methadone clinics, the Immunodeficiency Program at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (HUP), and the Jonathan Lax Treatment Program of Philadelphia Fight. HIV negative, non-drug using participants will be recruited from employees of organizations involved in the study, such as University of Pennsylvania and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Dr. Ho will give a presentation on Substance P on Monday, April 2, 2001 at the Treatment Research Center (TRC) at 3900 Chestnut Street. The talk is free and open to the public. CAB members who wish to know more about Substance P or the Substance P study are encouraged to attend.

For more information about the Substance P study call Annet Davis-Vogel at (215) 823-6078.

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*“The Substance P Study will recruit 200 participants.”*

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## **Update on Prevention Point Philadelphia.**

Prevention Point Philadelphia has a new director. Casey Cook began in Fall, 2000, replacing acting executive director Rob O'Brien. Casey has her Masters Degree in Social Work and Social Research from Bryn Mawr College. Casey previously worked for the Child Welfare League of America in Washington DC. There is also a new Site Coordinator, Genevieve Fulco who replaced Carrie Borgenicht, who left to join the Community Women's Education Project (CWEP).

Prevention Point is still involved in the We The People/One Day At A Time, store front project in West and North Philadelphia. The project provides HIV

testing, harm reduction counseling, peer counseling, street outreach, and referrals to social services. Joyce Hamilton is the Prevention Point staffer who works with this project.

PPP still has volunteer day on Mondays from 10 AM till 5 PM; exchangers and other community members come to the office at 333 W. Girard to fill bleach and water bottles, and put together packets with condoms and safer sex materials. The next volunteer training is March 4th from 1-5. CODAAP, Jeff Hope, and Hahnemann will be helping with the training.

### Spotlight on Sheryl Foster--RAP Staff.

Sheryl Foster has been an administrative assistant with the RAP project for the last five years. Sheryl is the person participants see on a regular basis. Sheryl works the front desk at the RAP Office at 5th and Girard, greeting clients, handling incoming calls, scheduling participants for appointments, and signing participant payment checks. Sheryl attends all Community Advisory Board meetings, handling reimbursements and token distribution. She also helps with CAB meeting preparation and ordering lunch.

Before coming to the RAP Office, Sheryl was a temporary employee with University of Pennsylvania. Sheryl loves her work at the RAP Office. "The work is very interesting, the nature of our research is interesting, and I enjoy working with the clients. There is never a dull moment at the RAP Office." With participants coming in and out of the office, phones ringing, and RAP staff needing assistance, Sheryl's job can be quite hectic, but she enjoys being busy and the fast pace make the days interesting.

### Spotlight on Thelma Henry--RAP CAB.

Thelma Henry has been a member of the University of Pennsylvania's Project RAP Community Advisory Board for seven or eight years. Ms. Henry joined the CAB when she was introduced by co-chair Valerie Simpson. Ms. Henry is currently secretary of the CAB. She was interested in getting involved in the CAB because she was working to find new interests. "I was on the methadone clinic at Goldman at the time and was trying to advance in my life goals. Joining the CAB seemed interesting and informative." Ms. Henry felt that it would be beneficial find out about HIV studies, HIV testing, and drug treatment programs. She wanted to be more involved in what was being done for drug users, especially as to HIV prevention and treatment. At first Ms. Henry visited CAB meetings, but eventually she was voted onto the board by other members. As CAB secretary her duties include taping, transcribing and typing minutes from board meeting, and taking extra notes as needed. She also keeps names and addresses of all current CAB members and helps in preparing for meetings.

As a CAB member Ms. Henry has gone to conferences to Washington DC and NY. "It was very enlightening, some of the conferences were day outings and some overnight. I've gone to Washington for 3 or 4 days for a conference for HIV research." She has participated in other CAB activities as well. "The CAB

as a whole has participated in the AIDS walk, raising money for AIDS projects" she said.

As for the future, Ms. Henry has several goals for the CAB. "We could be more visual out in the community. Do more outreach. Be more involved in talking to people in community--to individuals and groups-- about what can be done as to research and substance abuse programs."

Ms. Henry is excited about the new CAB Newsletter and would like to see more participation by CAB members, letters opinions, or personal stories from CAB members or people in the community.

Ms. Henry is fifty years old and a native Philadelphian. She enjoys reading, going to library, and participating in NA meetings. She is currently attending the ACT 1(Achievement Through Counseling and Treatment) methadone clinic and has been abstinent from drugs for over two years. After her father's passing last year, Ms. Henry is adjusting to not having "her rock" as she refers to her late father. She has close relatives and friends who are trying to bridge that gap, and fill that void in her life. She think that the CAB is doing a fantastic job. She says, "If members can continue to participate and involve themselves we can achieve the quality we have achieved in the past."

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*"Thelma Henry is currently secretary of the CAB."*

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Sheryl Foster



Thelma Henry

## Center welcomes visitor from Russia.

As part of the new HPTN study, the Center is hosting visiting researchers from Russia. Olga Toussavo and Olga Isakova are from the Vozvraschenye Foundation in St. Petersburg, and will be visiting for three weeks. The two researchers are both psychologists and particularly interested in HIV counseling issues.



*Olga and Olga*

Currently St. Petersburg is experiencing many HIV infections among heroin injectors. The average age of heroin injectors in St. Petersburg is about 18 years of age, and HIV appears to be spreading very rapidly. Like Project RAP, the Vozvraschenye Foundation is a site in the HPTN. Olga and Olga will be observing the RAP staff as they conduct enrollment, follow-up, counseling,

testing, and behavioral assessments. We look forward to working on future projects with our new colleagues in St. Petersburg. We hope to learn as much from them as they learn from us.

## Alarm over numbers of Black gay men infected with HIV.

A federal study, conducted in six major cities, found an alarming rate of HIV among Black gay men. The study found that 30 percent of young, gay black men are infected with HIV. In New York City the rate was 33 percent, compared to 16 percent for men generally and only 2 percent for white men. The news was particularly alarming since New York City has dedicated plentiful resources to HIV prevention and has had a powerful HIV prevention campaign.

Health care workers and others are now grappling with how to address the problem. One of the main obstacles to lowering HIV rates among this community seems to be the stigma and secrecy that surrounds homosexuality among gay, black men. Jamaal Roots, of the group Gay Men of African Descent said "If your sex takes place under bridges and on Christopher street down by the water, its seems dirty and you get it over quickly. You are not having conversions about 'Hey, let's protect each other.'"

Another problem impacting prevention strategies is poverty and illness. Some young men have unprotected sex with older men for money, drugs or temporary housing. Depression rates are high in this community as well. Matt Baney, an administrator of the Comprehensive HIV Center at St. Vincent Catholic Medical Centers in New York said "It may be there is so much social distress in those communities, the last thing they are thinking about is safe sexual practices."

In addition strategies for reaching this population are needed. Prevention messages have traditionally been tailored for white, gay men and they fail to reach or appeal to other communities with different problems and perspectives.

*Source: The New York Times*

## Quote of the Month.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

*Letter from the Birmingham Jail, April 16, 1963*



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