



# HIV + Aging Research Project | PS

## \*NEWSLETTER\*

VOLUME MMXXIV - ISSUE 8

APRIL - MAY 2024

### **HARP-PS ANNOUNCES FIRST WOMEN'S CONFERENCE!**

The SHE is  
*Women's*  
CONFERENCE

Shifting the narrative  
Healing her spirit  
Embracing the future

*This event is open to women living with HIV across the gender spectrum, those affected by HIV, and to caregivers and providers (HCPs) of HIV services. Join us for a day of empowerment, and sharing our experience.*



**SATURDAY  
JUNE 8, 2024**

**10AM - 4PM\***

**MIZELL CENTER**

480 S Sunrise Way  
Palm Springs, CA

*\*Registration at 9:30AM*

REGISTER NOW →



thewellproject

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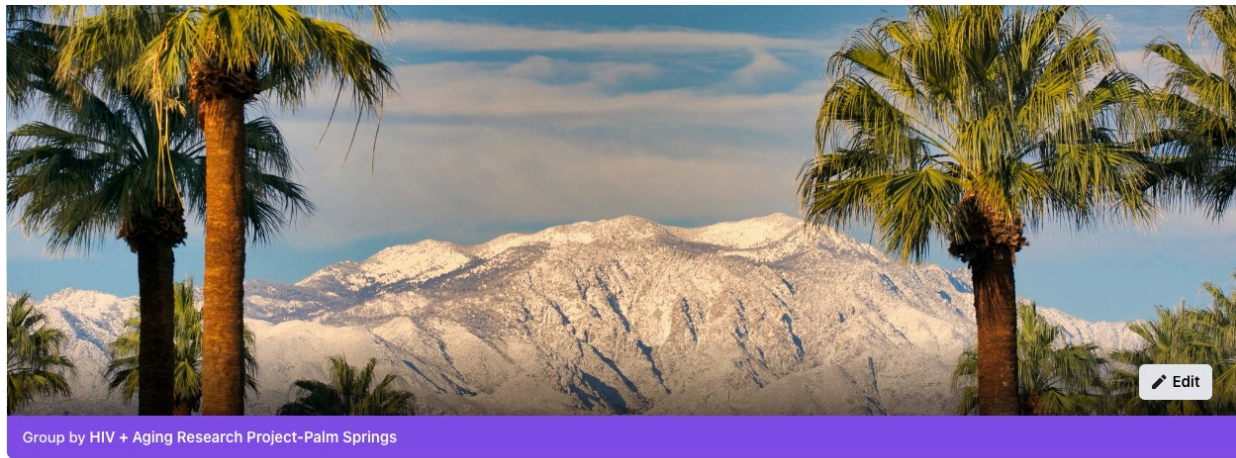
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# ***HIV+ Aging Research Project | Palm Springs Launches HIV+Village Palm Springs Facebook Group***



## **HIV+ Village Palm Springs**

Private group · 72 members



+ Invite

Share

Discussion

Guides

Featured

Members

Events

Media

Files



Write something...



Reel



Photo/video



Poll

Featured



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Jim Ferguson

18h · 🌐

HIV and Spirituality - What are your th...



Jim Ferguson

22h · 🌐

IS IT TIME TO CHANGE THE ACRONY...



MEDSCAPE.COM

Is It Time to Stop Using the Term AIDS?

### About

Welcome to the Palm Springs HIV+Village, a project of the HIV/AIDS Research Project Palm Springs (HARP-PS).

We're here to help long-term HIV a... [See more](#)

#### Private

Only members can see who's in the group and what they post.

#### Visible

Anyone can find this group.

📍 Palm Springs, California

[Learn more](#)

### Chats



Admins & Moderators

**JOIN NOW**  
**THE HIV+ VILLAGE PALM SPRINGS**

*Click Here or  
Scan The QR  
Code*

HIV+ Village Palm Springs, a safe Facebook group for people with HIV to connect, share experiences, and offer support to one another. The group serves as a resource hub where members can access the latest HIV-related news, treatment information, and resources.

The Village provides a platform for members to socialize, build friendships, and form supportive relationships with others who share similar experiences.

Overall, the HIV+ Village Palm Springs serves as a vital online community where people with HIV can find support, information, and solidarity as they navigate the challenges of living with HIV.







**Bridgette Picou**  
HARP-PS Board of Directors  
President at Large ANAC

## Art Therapy

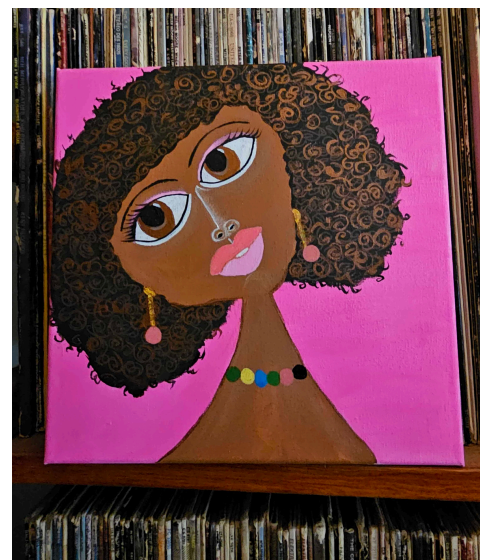
I saw a posting today calling for artists to work with scientists in collaboration to have art reflect the process of the science of HIV for a conference. It's a cool idea on several levels. It's only open to people who are living with HIV so it's not only an opportunity for artists' works to be seen, but it also gives an opportunity for the science of HIV to intersect with the humanity of HIV and I talk about that often in work and blogs. Here is a link to last years'. That's not what this is about though, lol. Not completely anyway.

As a nurse working in HIV, an advocate working for and with different HIV organizations, and as a woman living with HIV, the virus is everywhere for me. Aside from the overarching aspect of living with HIV, HIV also lives with me. It's how I pay bills, how I serve my patients and how I give back to my community. Sometimes, those

intersections get heavy. I never expected to eat, sleep, and breathe HIV after my diagnosis. I am certain that most of you can identify with all of the stages we go (and grow) through in becoming comfortable and accepting of our HIV status. It's never really a straight line, is it? We can be good for months, completely unbothered, and bam! Some random act of stigma puts you in a negative headspace, or dating goes wrong, or a health issue takes you left, and you have to reroute and reset.

One thing I have struggled with off and on is how to separate from HIV since I started doing this work. By separate, I mean give myself mental distance from thinking about HIV all the time. Not to mention the fact that there is general life to do outside of medications and doctor visits. Family, relationships, politics, life is gonna life! I love advocacy but sometimes it takes a toll. Call it a brain break, a spiritual separation, or an emotional escape—I've learned they are critical to mental health. The best euphemism I can compare it to is burning the candle from both ends. That's why this blog started to form in my head after seeing the posting I mentioned above. My specific thought was that art therapy (creating things for the spirit and self-expression) is ART therapy (therapy from taking antiretroviral medication). Language is such a pain sometimes, but amusing at others because art and ART are vastly different by definition, but both mean so much to our health and peace of mind.

ART therapy of the antiretroviral kind is a specific thing, right? Taking meds to stay healthy. Talk about a love-hate relationship! For me anyway. Our feelings about our medications are as varied as there are options for us to take. When I talk about ART therapy, it's a small way to encompass everything that comes with living with HIV. The medication is just one aspect, a physical manifestation and action we do to manage what HIV is in our lives. I can hold space for those of you who don't struggle with meds and for whom they bring a feeling of safety and security. That's a beautiful thing. For others though? It may be hard to remember to take them, they may make you feel poorly, or cause angst because you don't want folks to see them and ask what they are for. Or maybe, like me, it's a bit resentment over having to take them. Whatever the case, ART therapy has its role in the healthy mind/body/spirit spectrum. It keeps the virus at bay, the inflammation down and helps the body recover. Antiretroviral adherence and being undetectable can make us feel healthier overall, and it does feel great to know U=U means you can have sex without fear of transmission. (I think sex is an art form with beauty too, like Karma Sutra!)



*Bridgette Picou 2024*

Art of the creative kind comes in many versions. Painting, sculpting, making things, even dance or yoga can be a form of art. The beauty of art is that you can make it your own and do so many things with it. I have been making jewelry for a long time and picked up painting last year. I like them both for different reasons. I absolutely love seeing someone wearing a pair of earrings I made or having them tell me they got a compliment wearing them. It's also a small side hustle I can make a little extra money at 😊.

Painting, while different, is another thing I can sit and do for hours. I'm not an artist by any means, but I can paint what I see. It may not be as good as the original, but it settles my mind, stops my head and heart from racing and gives my body all the little breaks I was talking about. Painting reminds me that comparison to others is the thief of joy, and that even the things we think are imperfect are part of why we recognize beauty. Jewelry lets me make something pretty and then give it to another person to enjoy. Personal art, the art you create and share is a way for you to see yourself not reflected in mirrors.

I hope you find art in your life. Don't be scared to try something new. It doesn't have to be perfect to be just right. If not art, some hobby or venture that allows you to be in a moment that is not tied to HIV, or responsibility to anyone but yourself. Take a brain break.

## ***Dating Apps and Living with HIV***

*By Davina Conner Originally Printed in the April 13, 2023 Issue of HIV.Net*

We all know that we live in a world where people who live with HIV hide behind their diagnosis. I am not saying that they don't disclose but they don't want others to know who are not living with HIV. Over the last year, I want to share my experience when it comes to dating and men or should I say using dating apps.

Something that is very new to me. When I learned that people are now using apps to find someone I was in shock. I never like to put myself out there, but I wanted to experience something with this app thing.

I decided to make a profile on a few of them and these were not dating apps for people living with HIV. I never limited myself because I am living with HIV, I always felt that my diagnosis should not let me feel a certain way.

What I did was put in my profile that I was an HIV advocate, I worked at an organization where I traveled often, and I was open about my HIV. Guess what happened? There was message after message from many men of all races. Even though my profile said looking for Black men. It didn't shock me because men who were HIV-negative never had an issue with me living with HIV.

Then I went to some dating apps for people who were living with HIV and added the same profile stating that I was open with my HIV. The funny part was not one message (lol) at all from an app that had all men who were living with HIV. Why do you think that is?

Positive HIV status on apps It's because they are all in hiding and cannot see themselves with a woman who is confident with living with HIV. Because if they dated me, they would have to deal with everyone knowing that this woman has HIV, and they don't want anyone to think that they have HIV. I think that it's pretty sad.

It's like stigmatizing someone for the same thing that they live with. Does it bother me not at all? I wanted to do this so I could prove to everyone what I have been saying for years. Most men who are living with HIV will not be in a relationship with a woman who is living in her truth (open with her HIV).

I have become okay with the life I have, and that is doing what I was led to do and that is being an HIV educator, working in the HIV field, and letting the world know that I am happy with who I am. I can say that I would never change who I am just to be in a relationship because I would never be happy that way. We all want to find love right because this was how we were created.

All I can say is love will find me when it is time as long as it's someone who loves all of me for who I am.

# ***Older People, Especially Gay Men, are Getting STI's More Than Ever, What is Going On?***

*By David Hudson, Originally Printed in Queerty March 28, 2024*

Infectious disease experts say more needs to be done to address rising STI rates in older people. The call to action will be presented next month at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Disease in Barcelona, Spain.

In a press statement in advance of the conference, they explained what was happening... and suggested some reasons. For example, STI's in Americans aged 55 to 64 years have more than doubled over the past decade. It's even worse for gonorrhea, rising from 15 cases per 100,000 people in 2015 to 57 per 100,000 in 2019.

In England, the number of over 45s diagnosed with gonorrhea and syphilis doubled between 2015 and 2019. The majority of that rise has been in gay men.

Professor Justyna Kowalska from the Medical University of Warsaw, who leads the research offers some reasons. These include the rise of dating apps, and erectile dysfunction medication such as Viagra. An increasing number of people are having sex at a later stage in life.

"Rising divorce rates, forgoing condoms as there is no risk of pregnancy, the availability of drugs for sexual dysfunction, the large number of older adults living together in retirement communities, and the increased use of dating apps are likely to have contributed to the growing incidence of STI's in the over 50s", says Professor Kowalska.

It's known that some men are foregoing condoms due to advances in HIV treatment and prevention. "These data likely underestimate the true extent of the problem as limited access to sexual health services for the over 50s, and trying to avoid the stigma and embarrassment both on the part of older people and healthcare professionals, is leading to this age group not seeking help for STI's," continued Kowalska.

She says assumptions that people stop having sex as they age need to be challenged. For many people, sex remains an important part of their life into old age. In a study in England, 50% of men aged 70 and over reported being sexually active. In a Swedish study, 10% of those aged 90 and over said they still had sex.

"People do not become asexual with age," says Kowalska. "In fact, with preventive medicine and improved lifestyles people are enjoying a healthy life and sex life for longer."

"Older people often find greater satisfaction in their sex lives due to experience and known expectations. We need more role models like Samantha Jones in the TV show Sex and the City to challenge stereotypes around older sexuality."

Kowalska says health professionals need to talk more to older people about sexual health. "Sexual health campaigns are focused on young people and overlook the needs and experiences of those aged 50 and older," she says.

"Health promotion messages give the impression that condoms and concerns about STIs only apply to young people. But the dangers of undiagnosed and untreated STIs such as HPV-related cancers and onwards transmission are very real, particularly in this age group who are more likely to have underlying conditions such as heart disease and stroke."

Although the rates of STIs in older people are lower than those in younger age groups, health awareness material aimed at elders remains rare.

*Continued on page 6*





"I'm still enjoying sex at 76 – I live next door at 75!"

Queerty recently reported on how Amsterdam in the Netherlands had dramatically reduced its HIV transmission rates. It recorded just nine new cases in 2022. Part of the approach was a multi-pronged awareness campaign that included older people.

The film Ben and Juan - (Full version Dutch subs - Last Mile Campagne Mantotman.nl) is about a man who grew up during the AIDS epidemic having a hook-up with a younger guy. They discuss safer sex methods.

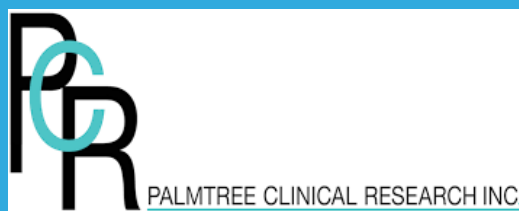
In 2021, the British counseling service, Relate, produced an advertising campaign exploring intimacy between elder couples. It included a pair of older gay men within the campaign.

In a campaign video, the couple talk about their shared moments of intimacy. This included their feet touching while they read in bed together to feeling like teenagers again if they have sex for the first time in a while.

"It might go infrequent but I think the older you get the better you get at it," says Mark, one of the men. "It's quite normal now on television, on TV programmes to see older couples sort of showing intimacy. But it's very rarely shown if the older couple is a gay couple."

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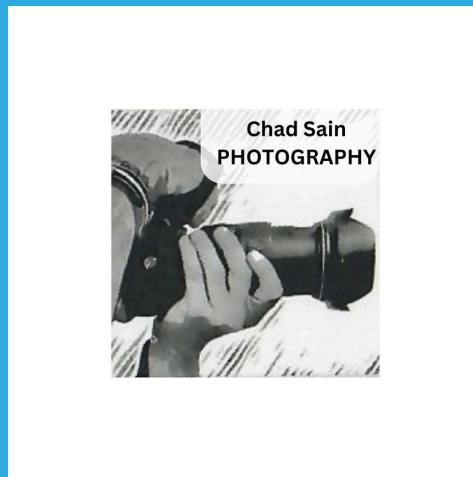


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# Upcoming Events



**MAY 7th, 2024**  
6:00 PM  
**HIV and Spirituality**  
Speaker: Dr. James Mellon  
Global Truth Center



**JUNE 4, 2024**  
6:00 PM  
**HIV & Chronic Pain**  
SPEAKER: Ami Student Phd



**JUNE 8TH, 2024**  
9:30 AM  
Mizell Center  
Palm Springs, CA



**JULY & AUGUST**  
**No Programs**  
**Summer Hiatus**  
**See You In September!**

## Resources

**Your California**  
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**Vaccination**  
**Record**



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In Home Care



**Utility**  
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**Programs**  
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Energy



**Healthy Recipes**  
Soups  
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Salads  
& More



## ***A Very Special Thank You To Our Volunteers!***

*Jim Ferguson – Program Director - HIV+ Village PS, and Layout of Newsletter*  
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*Ken Vergonet – Volunteer Social Media Manager*  
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