



Extreme Reality Summer 2009

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

The Northern AIDS Connection Society's (NACS) main focus remains prevention education and support of persons living with and those affected by HIV/AIDS in northern Nova Scotia, (Colchester, Pictou, Cumberland, and East Hants). Though the organization presently does not receive operational funding from the federal or provincial government, it is very fortunate to have a partnership with the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia where an upward amendment from the Public Health Agency of Canada provides funding for one staff member.

The organization is also very appreciative to Service Canada for providing funding for the AIDS Walk Coordinator through the Summer Student Employment Program. NACS has had the good fortune to have students in this position for the past five years. Another new program is the Job Creation Partnership through Service Canada and the Society

has received funding to hire one additional staff member for 52 weeks, from April 2009 to April 2010.

Through partnerships with the Nova Scotia Community College – Truro Campus and the Institute of Human Services we have been able to secure Student Placements working on the updating of our Simply Accounting files and the development of two Power Point Tools specific to women and young gay men.

A new and timely project initiative of the Northern AIDS Connection Society is the Hepatitis C Aware Project. A financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada has made this project possible. The focus of this project is harm reduction/risk management education and the development of focus groups, to accumulate information on hepatitis C in the northern region of Nova Scotia.

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SCOTIABANK AIDS WALK FOR LIFE

The Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life is the Northern AIDS Connection Society's top fundraiser of the year.

There are four walks in the northern region of Nova Scotia: Truro – September 20th, Amherst – September 19th, New Glasgow – September 13th, Elmsdale – September 19th.

Call NACS at (902) 895-0931, email Jacqi Arnold at walkcoordinator@eastlink.ca. You can also go online at www.aidswalkforlife.ca, click on your particular area and make online donations.



ART FOR AIDS AUCTION

The Art for AIDS Auction was held on June 22, 2009 at the Best Western Glengarry Hotel.

This event was very successful and is our second largest fundraiser of the year and NACS would like to thank all businesses and individuals that supported us this year.



RESOURCE LIBRARY

The Resource Library continues to provide necessary printed information to many students from local schools, colleges, universities, and community partners. The Library has approximately 10,000 publications.

NACS also has some resource material that can be signed out and borrowed for school projects and for the general public to become educated on HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and Sexual Health.

If you want more information on the Northern AIDS Connection Society you can go online to our website @ www.northernaidsconnectionsociety.ca.

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The organization also maintained its involvement in the Regional Atlantic AIDS Network (RAAN). This network has started a dialogue amongst AIDS Service Organizations in Atlantic Canada with the assistance of the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE). This has been a great opportunity for all groups working in the area of HIV/AIDS, sexual health, sexuality, risk reduction and more.

An upcoming event is the Atlantic Educational Conference co-hosted by CATIE and NACS. This event will be held in Truro October 7 & 8, 2009. NACS is looking forward to this partnership and to be involved in such a large scale event.

The Fund Raising activities have been the Art for AIDS Auction, the Psychic Fair, Walmart BBQ and the Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life. This past year has witnessed growth in the area of the walk, with NACS hosting four sites Truro, New Glasgow, Amherst, and Elmsdale. Once again this event received sponsorship from the Sobeys Family Foundation of gift cards that were distributed throughout Atlantic Canada assisting approximately 11 walks. This support enables NACS to form key partnerships with the other Atlantic community-based AIDS organizations. The walk is a great community networking event where all participating teams receive 50% of what they raise to purchase condoms or to provide training at the local level. The Board of Directors and the staff would like to express our sincere gratitude to all who supported our fund raising events.

Hepatitis C

Aware Project

You Can Have it and not know it!



HEPATITIS C AWARE

Hepatitis C is an infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV). HCV is spread by coming into contact with the blood of a person who is infected with the virus.

When first infected with HCV, most people do not develop symptoms of this viral infection. **You can have it and not know it.** In a process that takes many years, HCV infection slowly spreads throughout the liver. Healthy liver tissue is gradually replaced with scarred and damaged tissue. The spread of scar tissue is called cirrhosis. Once cirrhosis sets in, the risk of developing liver failure or liver cancer increases. **There is treatment available** the first step is to talk to your doctor or health care provider about a simple blood test for the virus.

We are undertaking education, awareness and risk prevention as well as an asset mapping process. The end result of the project will provide tools for NACS to use in the future, support groups for persons with HCV and new community partners to continue work collaboratively on escalating issues such as co-infection with HIV/AIDS. As the prevalence rate of HCV rises and as there is no vaccine to prevent HCV infection, researchers face formidable challenges in vaccine development because of the virus' propensity for mutation.

Contact Karen Kittilsen, Project Coordinator, to get involved and voice your concerns and opinions – they need to be heard and included in the project results and evaluation. It is the only way to influence change and ensure the continued, knowledge exchange, awareness and support for persons living with HCV. Karen can be reached at hepccoordinator@eastlink.ca (902) 895-0931.

LIPOATROPHY

Lipoatrophy is a condition often called facial wasting. It is probably the most Stigmatizing complication of HIV. Facial wasting is a big factor in dealing with depression and keeping ones confidence up in individuals with HIV. Lipoatrophy is thought to be a side effect of antiretroviral therapy (AVR), so it can affect adherence to therapy and some people may even stop therapy all together.

There are two Nucleoside Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (NRTI's) that are thought to be the biggest cause of Lipoatrophy. These drugs have the ability to damage cellular mitochondria. Mitochondria convert sugar and fat into energy for cells to reproduce and if the mitochondria are damaged, the fatty tissues in the face and other areas of the body get depleted. This can and often is a painful condition when sitting due to lack of fatty tissue in the buttocks area.

Some other factors that increase or decrease the risk of developing Lipoatrophy are: age, gender, genetic predisposition, CD4 count at the time therapy is started (lower CD4 the higher the risk for Lipoatrophy), and the length of time on AVR (the longer the time on therapy the higher the risk for developing Lipoatrophy).

Lipoatrophy can be prevented or reduced in one of three ways: by changing to medications that are less likely to cause mitochondrial damage, starting AVR before CD4 count reduces to very low levels, or by using natural or synthetic fillers in the areas that need treatment.

If you have any questions about Lipoatrophy you should consult you physician or other health care professional.