



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
PERSONS WITH AIDS  
SOCIETY



The British Columbia Persons With AIDS Society seeks to empower persons living with HIV disease and AIDS through mutual support and collective action. The Society has over 3,500 HIV+ members.

**Living + editorial board**

Wayne Campbell, Glen Hillson,  
Joel NC Leung

**Managing editor** Jeff Rotin

**Design / production** Britt Permien

**Copyediting** Darren Furey

**Contributing writers**

Carl Bognar, Jim Boothroyd,  
Glen Bradford, Treena Hansen,  
Katherine Heath, Diana Johansen,  
Thomas Kerr, Natasha Lapierre,  
Mona Loutfy, Janet Madsen,  
Devan Nambiar, Sergio Pineda,  
Ron Rosenes, Trena White

**Photography** John Kozachenko,  
Britt Permien

**Senior policy advisor on  
health promotion**

Paula Braйтstein

**Director of communications and  
education**

Naomi Brunemeyer

**Director of treatment and advocacy**

Tarel Quandt

Funding for *Living +* is provided by the British Columbia Ministry of Health and by subscription and donations

*Living+ Magazine*  
1107 Seymour St.

Vancouver BC  
V6B 5S8

TEL 604.893.2206

FAX 604.893.2251

EMAIL [living@parc.org](mailto:living@parc.org)

BCPWA ONLINE [www.bcpwa.org](http://www.bcpwa.org)



© 2002 *Living+*



# think +

opinion and editorial

## Selling safer sex to PWAs

by Glen Bradford and Wayne Campbell

**HIV** prevention campaigns rarely, if ever, address the reality of an HIV-positive person's life. Traditionally, HIV prevention messages have been directed at negative people, focusing on how to protect yourself from getting HIV. These messages send an unintentional signal that prevention is no longer our problem.

We need safe sex messages that speak to us.

Negotiating safer sex and using risk reduction to prevent transmitting or getting other infections is not easy. Those living with HIV know that disclosing our HIV status can lead to an increased sense of isolation and exclusion, making it difficult to disclose our status any time we try to be sexual with someone.

Safer sex requires the involvement of willing partners. For women, negotiating safer sex can be difficult because safe and low-cost, woman-controlled methods of HIV prevention do not currently exist.

Many of us have put ourselves in unsafe situations by mixing sex with drugs and alcohol. Low self-esteem may fuel a need for drugs to have a good time. Party drugs often decrease inhibition, which some people may feel they need to participate in the club or sex scene.

Preventing other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is also an important issue for people living with HIV. Infections such as HPV, hepatitis B and C, herpes, and cytomegalovirus (CMV— a member of the herpes family) remain major concerns. All these are potentially deadly infections in people living with HIV, but they can be prevented, to some

degree, through safer sex practices.

Be aware of both the real and theoretical risks as you discuss and negotiate safer sex. Every sexual behaviour or activity carries some level of infection risk. While it's generally believed that some activities are less risky than others, *low risk* obviously doesn't mean *no risk*.

Ultimately, we are all responsible for ourselves, and in the larger scheme of things nobody has the *right* to know everything about our lives. People you tell will have questions and make assumptions. Even if you have the answers, you may not want your life to turn into an educational crusade. However, as part of diverse communities, HIV-positive people have a moral responsibility to help keep our communities strong and healthy.

Less than a handful of organizations worldwide specifically direct HIV prevention towards positive people. The BCPWA Society is developing prevention campaigns directed towards HIV-positive people. Our first target group will be HIV-positive gay men. Other groups we will target include positive intravenous drug users and positive women.

We want to know what you think should be included in a prevention campaign of this kind. Sign up for a focus group or email us at [prevention@parc.org](mailto:prevention@parc.org). Don't let your voice go unheard. No one knows better than you do about living with HIV. ☩

*Glen Bradford and Wayne Campbell are board members of the BCPWA Society.*

*Living+* is published by the British Columbia Persons With AIDS Society. This publication may report on experimental and alternative therapies, but the Society does not recommend any particular therapy. Opinions expressed are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the Society.