

NATURE'S CURSE?

(the **XII WORLD AIDS** Conference,
Geneva, 1998)

(translated from Latvian)

According to the Tibetan medical system, AIDS is not something unexpected – in scriptures from centuries ago the “Mother Nature’s curse” was already foreseen. Tibetan system indicates that medicines alone are not enough – our deformed **moral values** should also be changed for a better (dr Neshar, India).

An important method in estimating the efficacy of different treatment options in patients’ own opinion, are the **quality of life** indicators (physical fitness, sensations of pain, tiredness, social activity, cognitive ability, sexual life, feelings/ emotions (including depression, anxiety, agitation, fears, anger, future uncertainty), public and intimate relations, job, self- esteem and passing spare time) (U.S.A. research).

A Swiss research on **long- term survivors** (min. 6 years with no symptoms, stable CD4>500 and no ART) and **slow- progressors** (the same, but CD4<500) shows that long- term survivors are younger than slow- progressors, and besides, their income is higher. 40% of them are using supplementary nutrients. It has been stated that the CD4 of long- term survivors was median 100 cells higher than the average (Italian research).

Nowadays an **individual approach** of the wide range of ART prescriptions plays an important role. The average is 6% of faulty prescriptions, while the introduction of ADDIS digital medical protocol has shown 0% of faulty prescriptions (France).

To fight **AIDS wasting** syndrome some scientists recommend human growth hormone (“Serostim” in this case), which in parallel, lowers VL and increases CD4 counts (U.S.A.). Other scientists (U.S.A.) are recommending anabolic steroids in complex with exercise and nutritional supplements (proteins, vitamins/ antioxidants). Scientists are declaring that steroids have no side- effects. Patients on ARV combinations had increases in muscle mass (for 14%), in CD4 counts (for 20%) and in CD8 (for 66%). Whereas HIV+ **smokers** are experiencing body weight decreases (U.S.A.).

Patients on Saquinovir and Ritonavir have no facial **lipoatrophy** (China). Instead, it has occurred to 24% of patients on Indinavir for more than 3 months. Reasons for this phenomenon are unknown.

And now - on complementary therapies!

Holistic approach: healthy lifestyle alone with no ART (positive attitude, yoga exercise, well- balanced diet, vitamin supplements, no smoking and alcohol) slows down AIDS progression and in 75% of PLWHA increases their body weight.

As usual, only some of the research is on natural remedies.

Glycirizzin (licorice root extract, available from pharmacies) has also anti-fungal effect in *Candida albicans* cases, widespread among Latvian PLWHAs (Japan).

Echinacea (*Echinacea angustifolia*) greatly enhances the activity of killer cells fighting HIV. It is cheap and has no side effects (U.S.A.).

A **healthy food** for PLWHA should best consist of the following:

- 50% - whole- grain products
- 30% - vegetables (especially – the green, white and yellow ones)
- 15% - legumes
- 5% - rest of products.

Natural products should be used instead of refined ones (e.g., unpolished rice instead of white, etc.), and junk food (“Fanta”, fast- food etc.) should be excluded.

A new discovery is the **coconut** ability to lower viral load and improve immune system. Using coconuts daily has even resulted in undetectable viral load. The side- effect is diarrhoea. A compromise could be coconut butter.

Psycho- social problems of PLWHA are being dealt by different agencies.

E.g., UNDP in Poland helps with **housing** for short or longer periods.

An office collecting HIV+ **personals** has been opened in India. It is the first of its kind in the world. In 3 years time 7 new families have been established.

Sexual problems of PLWHA have interested several scientists.

E.g., statistically:

- 23% of PLWHA are experiencing loss of sexual interest,
- 62% have erection difficulties. (U.K.)

The popular “Viagra” for potency increase should never be used together with “poppers”. The consequences may be lethal!

Safer sex is still on the agenda.

E.g., none of the enquired teenager male prostitutes or their clients in St Petersburg has used a condom.

Reasons for practising unsafe sex are different (as revealed during a research among homosexual youth, U.S.A.):

- belief that partner is safe (monogamous case or both are HIV+) - 39%
- impact of drugs/ alcohol – 37%
- physical pleasure – 24%
- “I shall not get infected!” – 22%
- non- insistence – 16%
- want to please the partner – 12%

- partner's insistence – 10%
- curiousness – 10%
- no condom at hand – 10%.

For this reason five prominent French film directors have started a campaign of eroticizing condoms. They have created unique erotic preventive films to be shown at sex- clubs and on the video.

An alternative HIV preventive measure is the use of female condoms in cases of homosexual anal intercourse, slowly gaining popularity in the U.S.A.

A.Kalnins,
AGIHAS