

POSITIVE CONNECTIONS



Wake Up Pune Newsletter

The Red Ribbon and the Importance of Support

The universally recognized red ribbon is worn around the world as a sign of support for those living with HIV/AIDS, but what does this symbol actually stand for and why is it so important?

Ignoring and marginalizing members of society living with HIV/AIDS leads to extreme consequences; people feel scared and are unwilling to get tested for fear no one will support them if they are HIV positive. Thus, providing a safe and strong support system for people living with HIV (PLHIV) is essential. It allows better access to proper treatment and a healthier lifestyle filled with love instead of discrimination, and this in turn enables people to live longer, happier lives. We, as human beings, have the responsibility to care for others, especially when they are facing challenges in their lives. It should be our duty to reach out to those who are

discriminated against. PLHIV deserve the opportunity to live a long, healthy life, and this is only possible when they are supported by their respective communities.

The red ribbon is an international symbol to promote solidarity with PLHIV. The campaign was started in the early 1990's in New York City by a group of artists working to visually unify the support effort. Since then, the red ribbon has been used to signify the importance of support, awareness and education about HIV and AIDS.

Wake Up Pune promotes the message that HIV/AIDS does not discriminate; it can affect everyone. Without a support system in place, we as a society are discriminating and turning our backs on people who need our help and a problem about which we should not be silent.

Positive Support
Issue 3 July 2009

Inside this issue:

- Global Week of Action
- International Day against Drug Use and Illicit Drug Trafficking
- Voices from the Community
- Harm Reduction
- Games & Quizzes
- Past & Future Events

How Can You Show Your Support?

It is essential for everyone to show their support for PLHIV. We need to **stop discrimination** and ignorance. We need to **end the silence**. we **NEED** to talk about it.



How can **YOU** show your support? Get educated about HIV/AIDS and become aware of the issues surrounding it. Wear the red ribbon to visually display your support and, lastly, spread the HIV Positive message! Be **Positive** about education, **Positive** about awareness and **Positive** about support.

Help to stop the dangerous cycle of discrimination, fear and silence occurring in our communities!



Global Week of Action 2009 "Together We Are The Solution"

The 'Global AIDS Week of Action' this year took place from the 17th to the 23rd of May 2009. It is a week for activists and concerned citizens all over the world to join forces to fight HIV/AIDS. It is a resolution made to support the 33 million people in the world living with HIV/AIDS, more than half of whom cannot come forth and seek treatment because of stigma and fear. It aims at not only creating awareness about HIV/AIDS, but also at holding world leaders accountable to their ambitious and landmark commitment to fight AIDS, made at the United National General Assembly Special Session on AIDS in 2001. The highlight event of the week is the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day on the 17th of May, when people all over the world come together and light candles in memory of all those who have passed away due to AIDS related illnesses. This year 115 countries marked this event together, but due to the election results being announced on the 16th, the event in Pune had to be shifted to the 20th. The Pune Candlelight Vigil 2009 was held on M.G. Road.

A Volunteer's Perspective

All over the world there are campaigns like Wake Up Pune, working to beat back the spread of HIV/AIDS. But even if the message of prevention and support is simple, finding a good way to communicate that message is not always easy. Community work is useful, because it can get right into the marginalized populations that are most at risk of HIV transmission. But, community workers have to be paid, and raw dissemination of information is not the most efficient way to distribute information to a vast and culturally diverse population. Most of this distribution is, by necessity, done by volunteers who come from fairly privileged socio-economic strata; the under-educated who are most at risk from simply not knowing

How do we find out how the message is being received? Or if the message is even being received?

how to avoid HIV tend not to have the time to spend volunteering with NGOs. So for all us middle-class university graduates and college interns, how do we find out how the message is being received? Or even if the message is being received? Well, you get a stage

and a band to play on it, some garish banners, and a man dressed in a giant red condom suit, and you create enough of a public nuisance to make people stop and stare long enough for you to hand them your information. Welcome to Global AIDS Week of Action Candlelight Vigil 2009, Pune!



So there's the aforementioned stage, music, frighteningly large contraceptive etc., on one side of the street and on other side, we were in our kiosk with our stacks of leaflets, waiting to pounce on any passerby momentarily curious as to what Pune needs to wake up to, or why someone is capering about a stage dressed as a giant red phallus. I always judge PR exercises by imagining my own reaction to them- and leaflets are easy, because handing them out is a miserable job, and to take one is almost a charitable act. But I seldom read anything I am handed in the street. So my first surprise is that there are very few of our leaflets lying on the ground when we have finished.

My second is that we manage to distribute our stack of 2000 HIV leaflets well inside our allotted two hours. So, there is a definite appetite for this information. And, encouragingly, those who ask questions do actually seem to be of the lower-income, higher risk socio-economic groups.

What we've learned, I think, is that we're not wasting our time. The issues that Wake Up Pune was set up to tackle are not at all hard to find, and the audience is not unresponsive to the message. The only problem is one of scale- we handed out 2000 leaflets on that evening, and we spoke to maybe a third of the people who took one. That's a lot, but the problem with attacking HIV discrimination is that while those at highest risk of HIV are a minority in society, and easy to target, those who may discriminate are, well, everyone else. That's a daunting thought, but changing public attitudes to discrimination issues is like mass marketing in any other sector- get a large enough minority behind your cause, and beyond the famed 'tipping point', the majority will follow. There's certainly a will to do that in Pune, and hopefully within the next ten years we will be able look back, if not on a job that is done and dusted, then at least on one that is well on the way.

The International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking



On June 26th Wake Up Pune organized a talk show at Wadia College in response to the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking. A hall packed with over three hundred students, recovering drug addicts, NGO leaders and interested citizens listened as knowledgeable panelists spoke

about the issues related to the day. The panelists were Dr. Gangakhedakar from the National AIDS Research Institute, Dr. Rohini P. Virathan from the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital, Elizabeth Selhore director of Sahara, Mr. Suhas Nadgauda Senior Inspector of Police Bund Garden, Ms. Mukta Puntambekar from Muktangan, and Dwijen Smart from Aarogya.com.

The task of the day was to educate about the dangers of drug addiction, understand the meaning of harm reduction, learn about the dangers of peer pressure and fight the discrimination drug addicts face. "Say no to drugs in the community but not to drug users," was the main message of the talk show. Often the stigma attached to drug addicts prevents them from getting adequate support and help to stop their addiction

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime annually recognizes June 26th as the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking. This year Wake Up Pune honored the day by holding an informative talk show and a delicious lunch at a local drop in center for drug rehabilitation.

Lunch at Pimpri and an Inside Look at the Drop-in Center

To celebrate the achievements of clients at the Pimpri drop-in center, Wake Up Pune members were invited for lunch at the center on Saturday June 27th. The afternoon was spent talking, eating and playing Carrom. It also gave Wake Up Pune members a chance to see first hand the ground realities of drug treatment programs.

Focusing on harm reduction methods, the Pimpri drop-in center provides a safe treatment space for local drug users. Outreach workers target popular areas to make drug users aware of the facility in their community and the positive results one can achieve from utilizing it. The process is self motivated and if a client wants support to wean him or herself off a substance the facility is there.

As noticed by a counselor at the drop-in center, most clients understand the harm in sharing needles and how that can lead to the spread of HIV, but the thrill of the high can induce negligence and thus needles are shared often. Another health issue related to injection is the harm in using dirty needles; this practice causes hepatitis B or C. Lastly, councilors teach clients about the risk of using more than one drug at a time, because the mixing can cause serious life threatening consequences.

Clients receive one on one counseling to provide them with this important knowledge. They can also obtain free oral substitutes prescribed by a doctor to more safely stop using drugs without withdrawal affects. Each person reacts differently to the pills therefore they are closely monitored and medicine is adjusted as needed. Furthermore, if clients need more medical attention such as abscess management, tests, x-rays or any other necessary treatments an outreach worker will accompany them to the local government hospital. Procedures and follow-up checkups are also provided. Clients can eat two meals a day at the center and often end up recommending the facility to others they know who are misusing drugs. In addition to the support system setup in the drop-in center, councilors also talk to and council families on the issue. This holistic approach ensures a safe and supportive environment for adequate treatment.

The Dangers of Discrimination

Unfortunately, a large part of society neglects to see the humanity in the world of drug addiction. There is an apathetic attitude towards drug users because some feel that if the problem does not directly affect their own life then why should they care about it? Or that distributing clean syringes and needles in the form of needle exchange only promotes drug use. Additionally, many people feel that drug users are already killing themselves with the substances they are using, therefore why should society take care of them or help them protect themselves from contracting a life threatening disease like HIV/AIDS or Hepatitis? The reality however is that drug addiction can affect everyone, and if it doesn't affect you then it might affect a family member or close friend. We all need to step up and make sure adequate, affordable, and safe centers are in place to support those trying to get back on their feet.

Intravenous Drug Use and the Spread of HIV

One of the four ways HIV can be spread is through the sharing of infected syringes and needles; therefore intravenous drug users put themselves at high risk if they do not use clean syringes and needles. Although illegal in India, seventy-seven other countries in the world have needle exchange programs. This means that organizations have the ability to give out clean syringes and needles for free, and therefore can limit the amount of sharing that takes place between intravenous drug users, as well as promote the use of clean equipment to prevent Hepatitis B and C.

Treatment centers around the city provide oral substitution and support for recovering drug addicts. The problem with many treatment centers currently being used is that they are extremely expensive, between three thousand and seven thousand rupees a month, which is impossible for many to afford. Also, if a person is HIV positive, they may not even be accepted into a treatment program due to discrimination.

When society discriminates and turns its back on intravenous drug users, who need support, they are not only giving up on a human being but also limiting their potential in the world.

Harm Reduction

When outreach workers approach drug users who are partaking in risky behavior such as fixing, sharing needles, or using more than one drug at a time, the message given is harm reduction, not abstinence. This means that drug users are told how to safely use drugs instead of misuse them. And most importantly if they

“We are not saying not to use drugs we are telling them ways of doing it safely.”

desire to stop using drugs altogether then the support system is in place to help them through that process.

The phrase, “safely use drugs” may sound a bit odd at first, but in reality instead of injecting there are safer ways of achieving the desired high. For example, intravenous drug users take steps to move away from harmful fixing practices to safe injection practices and finally to no injection. The last step comes in the form of replacing injecting with another substance such as buprenorphine - an oral substitute.

The oral substitute allows the drug

user to manage their life without suffering from the effects of withdrawal. Instead of waking up and wondering how they will get enough money to pay for drugs, which can lead to other destructive behaviors like stealing and cheating, they can take a pill that controls the withdrawal symptoms and gives the recovering addict their life back.

The oral substitute has no side effects unless mixed with alcohol. In addition if taken continuously for fifteen to twenty days the 'ceiling effect' occurs. This ceiling effect prevents the body from feeling the same high from other drugs as it did before. This is done on purpose to dull the effects of other drugs, which in turn should keep people away from those drugs.

Abstinence only programs do not work for everyone, for some it is the best option but for others it is not the answer to the problem. Thus by taking an oral substitute provided free by many organizations the drug user has the ability to function in society. Harm reduction methods allow the drug user to slowly come off the drug they are currently addicted to, while getting the proper support needed to help them.

What Does Support Mean to You?



"Acceptance is what support means to me."
-Natalie
Deep Griha Society Volunteer

"HIV+ need support from the stigma and discrimination they face. They need emotional, educational, financial, and positive support from everyone. Support is a holistic approach."
-Avinash
DISHA Team Leader



"To help others when someone is sad or in trouble. If someone does not have a house then you give them a place to stay."
-Lalita
Deep Griha Society Community Member

"Give support in the form of medication and in the form of talking. People also receive support by getting healthcare and good nutrition."
-Laxmi
DISHA fieldworker



"Helping others. For example donating blood like my friends and I did for a good friends mother."
-Ajay
Deep Griha Society Community Member

HIV Positive Word Search

O C W A V C T W W S N D R R D
S W S B M E I B L O O D X I A
Z E K I S G Y M I A V T S K P
A H M T S S I T E L V C W O G
E W E E U O C T U D R L S N E
D D A R N E L T S I I I H O N
U H I R T C R U M Q T P A I U
C V F O E O O I C I L I E T P
A Q R M P N N N V R D H M U P
T P A P C A E E D S E H Z L U
I Z U Y T T E S G O Z B I O E
O S R I B B O N S I M G U S K
N Y O P R E V E N T I O N T A
Y N R E H T E G O T M D K L W
N O I S S I M S N A R T L W O

AIDS	SEMEN
AWARENESS	SOLUTION
BLOOD	STIGMA
CONDOM	SUPPORT
DISCRIMINATION	TESTED
EDUCATION	TOGETHER
EPIDEMIC	TRANSMISSION
POSITIVE	TUBERCULOSIS
PREVENTION	VIRUS
PROTECTION	WAKEUPPUNE
RIBBON	

Recent Events



Hammerfest Fest II, June 8, 2009: Wake Up Pune was at Hammer Fest II, along with over 500 concert goers. Volunteers spoke to the crowd about spreading the positive message about HIV/AIDS and protection as well as handing out condoms and information brochures.

Pune Station Awareness Event: Not even the rain could deter dedicated volunteers from going to the Pune train station to distribute informational leaflets in English and Marathi and red ribbons. After only an hour and a half over one thousand ribbons and leaflets had been given out. SUCCESS! Check back to the website for more information about future awareness activities.



Wake Up Pune
www.wakeuppune.org
Deep Griha Society
13 Tadiwala Road
Pune 411001, India
wakeuppune@gmail.com