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THE DOC IS IN: Is HIV a Terminal Illness?

Posted Jul 12th 2007 9:45PM by [Angela Bronner](#)
 Filed under: [AIDS: 25 Years and Counting](#)



Question: Is HIV/AIDS a terminal illness?

Answer: *This is a very good question and would have been a lot easier to answer in the late 1980's and early 90's. Before I answer, let me first define "terminal illness." There are many definitions for terminal illness, but the most accepted definition is an illness that is incurable and will result in death in a certain time period. This definition is commonly used by hospice agencies and helps to determine the patient's eligibility for services.*

In the case of an HIV infected person in the '80s and '90s, treatment options were limited and many died from complications of AIDS. Since the introduction of Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART), which is the use of multiple medications to treat HIV/AIDS, this disease has evolved from a terminal illness to a chronic illness and individuals are living longer lives.

With that being said, HIV/AIDS is a terminal illness if one does not have access to care and/or is non compliant with his or her medical therapy. HIV/AIDS patients who do receive adequate treatment and have access to care can live a normal lifespan.

Seems to me, then, that the answer is "NO." **HIV is no longer considered a terminal illness.** But it can be, if not treated. More of a reason to [find out your status](#)....

Please keep your questions coming.

Dr. Rani G. Whitfield, MD, also known as **Tha Hip Hop Doc (H2D)**, has a general practice in Baton Rouge, LA. He has appeared on BET's '106th and Park' and has a chapter in the book, ['Not In My Family'](#) -- a collection of essays on AIDS in the African-American community.

For more on Tha Hip Hop Doc, please visit his Web site: www.h2doc.com

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1. I'm not a Doctor, but for an illness to be terminal it should lead to the hasty end of life within a reasonably short period of time. HIV is unique. With aggressive treatment, proper diet, and increased awareness; it is unknown as to the life expectancy of anyone contracting this disease. HIV does lead to death and it reduces the quality of life, but the stigma of the disease hurts us all. Fear of HIV is driving individuals to "out" individuals for selfish reasons. Unless you decide to have sex with that individual, HIV status is non of your business. Is it terminal? How is Magic Johnson doing? He could be a greater leader off the court than he was on. You must admit that he was pretty good. Just because it doesn't look like HIV will kill you immediately, it doesn't mean you should go out and carelessly catch it.

Cecil Jones at [9:53AM](#) on Jul 13th 2007

2. Yes I think that HIV is a terminal disease. True with the proper medication and health regimen your life can be extended, but the fact of the matter is that some of the medications are just as harmful as they are helpful. Some of them help to raise your T cells while at the same time destroy your liver and kidneys, others lower your viral load and decimate your digestive tract. After a while you are not just on the cocktail that is to treat HIV, but you are also on other medications that treat the damage that the cocktail has caused. HIV is most definitely a terminal illness that kills you slowly and methodically. Don't be mistaken about a person with HIV's appearance because they may start out with more good days than bad, but it almost always turn the other way around. I don't tell you this from what I've heard, I tell you this from what I've seen. If you have HIV your death is eminent!

TABATHA ALDRIDGE at [9:54AM](#) on Jul 13th 2007

3. yes HIV is definitely a terminal disease. The cocktail that they put you on to raise your T cells and lower your viral load reek havoc on your liver, kidney, and digestive tract. once you are on it for so long, you end up needing more medication to treat the problems that have arisen due to the side effects of the medication given to you to help save your life and a life that once was bearable soon becomes a life of misery, heartache and pain. HIV attacks the mind the body and the soul. it kills slowly and methodically with no regard for age, creed, or color. It kills everyone it touches whether you're infected or not. I say these things because i witnessed them first hand and I've seen the devastation that its capable of.

Tabatha Aldridge

Auntie of one who was lost

TABATHA ALDRIDGE at [9:54AM](#) on Jul 13th 2007

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