

CheckUP

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Important news from the nation's leading health care facility serving the LGBT communities

From the Executive Director

Dear Friend,

It's been almost a year since I started as Executive Director – a year of big changes in the world around us and here at Callen-Lorde.

Same sex marriage is now legal in California (and recognized in New York)! I was fortunate to be able to attend a wedding of a longtime couple who have each been HIV-positive since the 80s. In the first days of their relationship, they were unsure if they would have much time together, let alone see the day they could legally marry. On some fronts, we have come a long way.

On the other hand, we recently learned that previously published numbers of people with HIV were significantly wrong – the epidemic is much worse than we thought. Presidential debates are highlighting problems with our healthcare system, which are worse than ever: 47 million people in the US are uninsured. And, LGBT people are more likely to be uninsured.

We still live in the reality that many of us don't have access to healthcare.

In the midst of that reality, Callen-Lorde is here. We're here for the 12,000 people we saw last year. We're here for people with toothaches, sore throats, high blood pressure. We're here for people facing depression. Our HOTT Program is here for the too-many teens living on the streets after being kicked out of their homes. We're here for people who need to be screened for anal cancer (see page 2). We're here for Laura Jacobs (see page 3). And soon, we'll be here for people who want to start a family (see page 3).

It's not easy in these hard times to be here in all of these different ways. But because of your support, we make it work. And as always, I am extremely grateful. Thank you.



Wendy Stark



2008 Pride Festivities Began with a Walk on the Wild Side

Hundreds of supporters gathered to attend our annual Walk on the Wild Side in the beautiful Central Park Zoo to eat, drink, party, marvel at the animals — but mostly they came in acknowledgment of the incredible life-saving work done every day at Callen-Lorde.

One part company picnic, one part donor appreciation, and three parts fun again proved to be the ingredients for an awesome summer night!

Guests received a warm welcome from LOGO and HBO comedienne Judy Gold, who brought her special brand of humor — and her kids — to the event. This year, our special musical guests were Selloane Nkhela and Sean Bradford from the Broadway cast of Disney's *The Lion King*. Both Selloane and Sean sang to the crowd followed by a special performance by Christopher T. Magician.

The faces of the enraptured kids — and adults — were a sight to behold! Thanks to all of our celebrity guests, our staff, and loyal donors who helped make the evening truly memorable. ▲

New evidence shows that anal cancer is on the rise.

Read about the risks and ways you can stay healthy in our Medical Director's article on page two.

SURVEY SAYS: PATIENTS ARE SATISFIED

The satisfaction of a job well done is clearly rewarding. But when that job involves providing extraordinary LGBT health care, the rewards increase exponentially.

It starts with a basic presupposition: We treat all of our patients with sensitivity and respect. We understand how important it is for them to feel good about coming to 18th Street ... that they feel confident about our skills ... that they know they'll be treated with dignity.

To make sure that we are on track, Callen-Lorde periodically conducts patient satisfaction surveys and the results of the latest one were just compiled.

Data was collected over the last six months through a questionnaire, in which Callen-Lorde asked its patients to rate services on a five-point scale: Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, and Poor. The results were astounding—stellar even— with patient satisfaction improving 37% across every measured category, as compared to last year's results.

- Overall satisfaction improved 22%— but that rate skyrocketed to 92% among our patients of transgender experience!
- The HOTT Program received an "Excellent" rating from its patients
- Medical and GYN Services also received equally strong scores.

The most frequently identified area in need of improvement was no surprise: the phone system. As a result, a group of Callen-Lorde staff members formed a team to address the problem— and major improvements are on the way. This will make appointment scheduling, prescription refills and contacting a staff member easier for most patients.

For more details on the upgrades and what this will mean to patients, please see the article page 4. ▲

HELP US WITH OUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS!

Visit www.callen-lorde.org to join our Email Communication Center.

As a member, you will receive future issues of *CheckUP* and invitations to our events like **Walk on the Wild Side** and the **Community Health Awards** delivered right to your email inbox.



Gal Mayer, MD
Medical Director

Gal Mayer

The Medical Director's Report ...

UPDATE: Anal Cancer Screening and Prevention

This column gives me the opportunity to discuss some of the many unique health challenges that our communities face.

Today I would like to discuss one that too many

of us know too little about: **anal cancer.**

First, let me clarify a common misconception: anal cancer is different from colorectal cancer. Colorectal cancer (*which I discussed in the last issue of the Check Up*) can happen in any part of the 5-6 foot long large intestine — from the appendix in the right lower abdomen to the rectum. Anal cancer occurs in a very specific and small area where the rectum ends and the anal canal begins, about two inches in from the anal opening.

Another very important difference is that almost everyone is at equal risk for colon cancer. Behaviors like what you eat or how much you exercise can have a small influence on your colon cancer risk, but not much.

Anal cancer, on the other hand, is really a sexually transmitted disease. Anyone who has anal sex is at much higher risk than someone who does not have anal sex. Therefore, as a group, men who have sex with men are

considered at higher risk. Moreover, HIV-positive gay men are two-to-three times as likely to develop anal cancer than HIV-negative gay men.

While the exact causes of anal cancer — as with all cancers — remain a mystery, there is a large amount of evidence that human papillomavirus (HPV) infection is at the root of this disease. HPV is a group of viruses that mostly cause warts, but can also cause cancer, depending on which strains are causing the infection. How common is HPV infection in men who have sex with men? According to **Dr. Stephen Goldstone** at Gay Health (www.gayhealth.com), *"Approximately 95% of gay men with HIV and 65% of gay men without HIV have HPV in their anal canals or the surrounding skin."*

The virus can be transmitted by casual contact, which is how warts mostly wind up on our hands, feet and face. However, it is also very commonly transmitted by sexual contact and can lead to cancer on some inner surfaces of the body, like the cervix, under the foreskin, and in the anal canal. HPV infection is the main cause of cervical cancer and the reason why sexually active women and transgender men should have annual cervical Pap smears.

In fact, anal cancer and cervical cancer are

very similar diseases, with some very important differences. They're both caused by the same high-risk strains of HPV. They're both transmitted by sexual contact. The risk for both is reduced, but not entirely eliminated, by using condoms. And they're both more common and more aggressive in people who are infected with HIV. They are so similar that the estimated rates of anal cancer in gay men today are about the same as the rates for cervical cancer in women 65 years ago, before screening with Pap smears revolutionized cancer prevention and saved thousands of lives.

The biggest difference between anal and cervical cancer is in public awareness and understanding of screening. Most young adolescent girls know that they need to get a cervical Pap smear annually after they become sexually active. However, most gay men and other people who have anal sex have no idea that they might be at higher risk for anal cancer, and no idea that there are options for screening and prevention.

But if cervical cancer is our model, there is reason to hope. Routine cervical Pap smears have decreased the incidence of cervical cancer from 40 to 50 per 100,000 to approximately eight per 100,000. It is likely that the same type

Continued next page

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY IN "ALTERNATIVE" WAYS

At Callen-Lorde, we strive to meet the unique medical needs of our community — and we make no exception when our patients want to start families.

This is why we proudly offer our new Alternative Insemination Program (AI), as we support our community on its journey to parenthood.

Our goal is to help patients who want to become parents ascertain which approach works best for them. We offer both office-based insemination services and instruction in home-based, non-technical insemination.

Whether a patient is just beginning the AI process or is already experienced, Callen-Lorde offers uniquely tailored care that encompasses family-building options, fertility awareness, assistance with donor selection, and sperm storage.

Jennifer Johnson, Clinical Director for the AI Program underscores an

overriding Callen-Lorde principle: *"We stand behind women — indeed everyone — in their choices. Our ultimate aim is to ensure the optimal health of our patients prior to, during, and after pregnancy. It is thrilling to be part of this forward-thinking junction in health care."*

Our communities deserve options for starting a family - and now those options are increasing.

Callen-Lorde is on the cutting edge of LGBT health and we view AI as another step forward — especially for those who feel marginalized by other insemination clinics.

Another positive: The income generated by this program will benefit all of Callen-Lorde — and our efforts to ensure the health of all who turn to us for care ▲

The Medical Directors Report: *Continued from page 2*

of screening and prevention efforts can have a similar effect on the rates of anal cancer in gay men and people with HIV.

Some consider anal cancer screening and prevention controversial. The skeptics correctly point out that there is little evidence to show that anal Pap smears decrease the rates of anal cancer or save lives. Gathering such evidence would take decades and cost millions. But to be fair, there was never much evidence that cervical Pap smears were effective until many years had gone by and the dropping rates of cervical cancer in communities where Pap smears were used could be easily measured.

This is why Callen-Lorde is extremely proactive in advising our patients of anal cancer risks. As in so many ways, we have been on the cutting-edge of prevention, offering screenings to our HIV patients since 2004, long before they became the accepted protocol. (The AIDS Institute of New York State started recommending anal cancer screening and prevention for people with HIV in 2007.)

While we believe it is probably prudent for all gay and bisexual men to get an anal Pap smear to determine if they have abnormal cells, we are focusing our current efforts on

our HIV patients, since they are at highest risk. HIV-positive patients who need anal cancer screening should get anal Pap smears every year. HIV-negative patients probably only need an anal Pap smear every two to three years.

Getting a Pap smear is simple and only minimally uncomfortable. A provider passes a swab into the rectum to collect cells that will later be examined under a microscope. If abnormal cells are seen, the patient returns for a more extensive examination of the anal canal using a microscope — called High-Resolution Anoscopy (HRA). Although it sounds intimidating, the procedure is actually very simple, very low-risk, and very easy. It requires no sedation or general anesthesia and takes about 15 minutes. Most patients go right back to work the same day.

If precancerous tissue is discovered during the HRA, we offer infrared treatment right at Callen-Lorde, which is non-invasive and involves mild and transient side effects.

At Callen-Lorde we know that to avert pointless suffering, we must give our patients all the facts about this disease and how screening can lead to prevention or early detection — a major factor in beating all types of cancer. ▲

THE 2008 CALLEN-LORDE COMMUNITY HEALTH AWARDS

NOVEMBER 17, 2008
6 TO 9

AT ESPACE
635 WEST 42ND STREET

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: Community Health Awards

On Monday November 17th, we will once again honor the individuals and organizations that have positively impacted the health and well-being of our communities.

THIS YEAR'S HONOREES

Kevin Fenton, M.D., Ph.D., FFPH,

Director of the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention

HSBC Bank USA, N.A.

For its dedication to diversity and inclusion, especially to its LGBT employees and clients

Stacey L. Silvers, M.D.

Physician and philanthropist, for her passionate commitment to the health and well-being of people living with HIV/AIDS

We hope that you will join us to honor their achievements — **and to help us celebrate our 10th anniversary as the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center!**

Sleek and modern **Espace** will be the elegant and exciting new location for our gala fundraiser. We hope to see you there!

For information on becoming a sponsor, table captain, host committee member, or to purchase a ticket, please call Ed Galloway, Director of Development and External Relations at 212-271-7263 or edgalloway@callen-lorde.org.

MY HEARTFELT GRATITUDE

When I became a patient at Callen-Lorde a few years ago, it was during a period of great transition in my life. I had just quit an unsatisfying job ... returned to school to finish my BA ... and I was still a man.

Today, I hold a MA in Social Work from NYU ... obtained a social work license ... and I am now a woman.

These days I am a therapist, working with people who are coping with HIV/AIDS in Westchester. But I also publicly speak on issues that are close to my heart: gender, sexuality, and finding more positive possibilities for people who identify as transgender.

And through it all, Callen-Lorde has played

a significant role in me becoming who I am.

No road in life is easy. Yet, for someone like me it is especially difficult because gender is one of society's most fundamental precepts and one of the most basic ways we have of defining identity.

Changing one's gender takes a courageous exploration of oneself And having a supportive environment like Callen-Lorde is critical. Callen-Lorde providers were never judgmental and never stereotyped me. Instead, they viewed me as a person.

Recently I was asked to become part of the Callen-Lorde **Transgender Community Advisory Board**, and I look forward to guiding the environment that so nurtured me. — **Laura Jacobs, LMSW**

Our Mission

Callen-Lorde Community Health Center provides sensitive, quality health care and related services primarily to New York's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities -- in all their diversity -- regardless of ability to pay. To further this mission, Callen-Lorde promotes health education and wellness and advocates for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender health issues.

FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

MAC AIDS Fund
Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS
The Greater NYC Affiliate of Susan G. Komen
for the Cure
H. van Ameringen Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Michael W. McCarthy Foundation
Prospect Hill Foundation, Inc.
U.S. Trust Company of New York
Citigroup Foundation
Rosie's For All Kids Foundation
The Ted Snowdon Foundation
Diving for Life Foundation, Inc.
The Gatewood Foundation
The New York Community Trust
Corcoran Cares Group

CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

Midtown Cardiovascular, LLC
Lutheran Family Health Centers
Saatchi & Saatchi Healthcare Communications, Inc.
BioReference Laboratories
Lehman Brothers
Pfizer, Inc.
Caremark Rx, Inc.
Madison ENT & Facial Plastic Surgery
BioScrip & Subsidiaries
Abbott Laboratories
Financial Dynamics
Linklaters, LLP
Weil, Gotshal & Manges, LLP
Roche Laboratories, Inc.

Advanced Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation
Infinity Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation
ZMK Group, Inc.
Beth Israel Medical Center
Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals
RSM McGladrey

CalLEN-LORDE COMMUNITY SUSTAINERS (\$5,000+)

Darren Henault and Michael Bassett
Ellen Alpert and Janice Sears
Claudia Slacik
Stephen M. Baker and Nadine A. Chang
Perry Borenstein
Steven R. Victorin and Neil Parker
Kriszcar Bungay and James O'Sullivan
Elisabeth Benjamin and Daniel Coughlin
Daniel Dokos and Glenn Finn
John and Ian Archer Watters
Martin and Andrew Farach-Colton
R. Brandon Fradd
Lawrence M. Weingart
Michael L. Bayer and Miguel Marzullo

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Alexandra Shiva
Tom Viola
Samuel Wiener
Douglas A. Wirth
Andrea Woodner

UPGRADING OUR PHONE SYSTEM

Providing our community with access to quality care is a distinguishing hallmark at Callen-Lorde, yet in our day-to-day operations we realize that our phone system is not exactly user friendly.

In fact, the system is the top patient complaint we receive. To make patients feel less frustrated, we gathered a team of seven Callen-Lorde staff members to solve the problems of our antiquated phone system. The team met weekly for a number of months and identified problem areas – and developed solutions.

Pilot-tested, the new system is about to be inaugurated!

The biggest — *and most* welcome — change is the introduction of a call center where a live staff person will answer all incoming calls during our hours of operation. A new voicemail menu will be available during closed hours, which is patient-centered and easy to follow.

We expect the call center and the new voicemail menu to be implemented in the middle of September 2008.



CalLEN-LORDE NOW OFFERS FREE HIV TESTING!

TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT, PLEASE CALL (212)271-7200.

WALK-INS ARE WELCOME SATURDAYS 9:30AM-1:30PM ON A FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED BASIS.
FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR HIV SERVICES, PLEASE VISIT WWW.CALLEN-LORDE.ORG.