

Our+Care OC

A newsletter created by HIV-positive individuals
for people living with HIV



What's the Tea? QualiTEA!



This issue of the Our+Care newsletter will talk about how you can improve the quality of care you receive.

Spill the TEA

One of the ways that you can make sure your healthcare is the best it can be is to be honest, or **“spill the tea”**, with your doctor. Your doctor is not there to judge you; your doctor is there to help you stay healthy. Tell them if you missed doses of your HIV medications or forgot to go to your medical appointments. Talk to your doctor about your sexual practices and behaviors that may increase chances of transmitting HIV to others. Being honest with your doctor allows them to work with you better on improving your healthcare.



To prepare for your doctor's visit, think about things that you want to share with your doctor that makes you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. Practice sharing the information with a friend, case manager, or writing it down. Doctors are used to talking about personal matters and they will do their best to make the conversation a little easier.

Share any changes in your life with your HIV doctor, including changes to your health insurance, your living situation, or relationships. If you are dealing with other health conditions like diabetes, hypertension, hepatitis, etc., let your doctor know. This can help them understand any challenges you may have to your ability to take HIV medications regularly, see your doctor, and keep your viral load low.



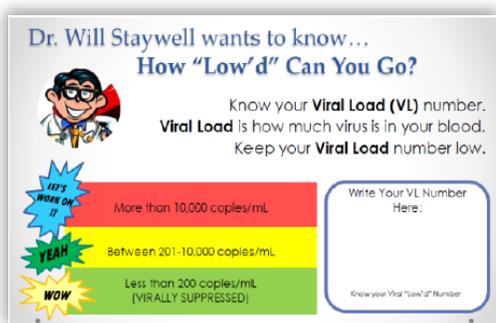
Things to share with your doctor:

- ✓ Any side effects from medications
- ✓ Sexual health information
- ✓ Drug/alcohol use
- ✓ Mental health issues
- ✓ Changes with health insurance
- ✓ Changes in your relationship status
- ✓ Changes in sleeping habits
- ✓ Changes to your living situation



Get the TEA

Another way to improve the quality of your healthcare is to get as much information as you can from your doctor. Take notes when you are at the doctor's office to help you remember all the information they give you. Keep track of your viral load and see if your viral load has gone up or down. You can ask your doctor for your past labs or you can keep track of it yourself. Having a low viral load is important to keeping yourself healthy. It also helps reduce transmitting HIV to others. Be prepared with questions to ask your doctor so they can answer them. This helps the doctor understand what is important to you and will address those items first.



Get a card from a Ryan White case manager to keep track of your viral load.



Dr. Will Staywell discussing client's viral load

Things to ask your doctor:

- ✓ What is my viral load?
- ✓ What does my viral load mean?
- ✓ How does this test result compare to my previous test results?
- ✓ Are there other things I can do to improve my health?
- ✓ When is my next appointment and what do I need to bring?

QualiTEA Health

Are you interested in making an impact on the quality of HIV services for others and yourself? You can do this by joining the Ryan White Quality Management (QM) Committee or the Ryan White HIV Client Advocacy Committee! The committees look at health data and develop campaigns to help people living with HIV to stay healthy. For more information, please contact Martha Garcia at MGarcia@ochca.com.

ORANGE COUNTY HIV QUALITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



This is a project of the Orange County HIV Quality Management Committee and HIV Client Advocacy Committee. The HIV Quality Management Committee works to improve the quality of Ryan White services. If you have feedback or suggestions for future newsletters, please contact **Mindy He** at MHe@ochca.com.

