



# The Pitt Men's Study

News and Notes

Summer 2015

## A Message to Our Participants

by William Buchanan



If you've ever been a member of the Pitt Men's Study, we want you back!

Why?

The Pitt Men's Study is a cohort study, which means that we follow a group of people over a long period of time. One of the ways a cohort study achieves powerful scientific results is through retaining as many of its volunteers as possible. When a study like ours loses too many of its volunteers, the scientific community views our research findings as less valid due to the "gaps" in our data.

Therefore, each and every one of you is important to us.

First, you are important to us because you are not just participants – many of you are like family. We've developed strong relationships with many of our

volunteers over the years, and we just simply care about you and enjoy seeing you.

But you are also important to us because every time you come in you contribute to an ever-widening body of knowledge that has made and will continue to make major strides in the health of our volunteers and of the general population as well.

And it's not just about HIV anymore. In addition to finding better treatments, effective vaccines, or even a cure for HIV, there are important questions that we can answer concerning cardiovascular, pulmonary, and renal health just to name a few. But for every volunteer who drops out or loses contact with us, our ability to answer these questions is diminished.

Whether or not you have HIV, whether or not you are sexually active, whether you are young or old, whether you are Caucasian or a person of color, whether you have kept regular appointments or haven't been in in years, whatever the state of your health (good or bad), you matter.

We know that asking people to come in every six months can seem like a lot, that we ask a lot of questions, that we draw a lot of blood, that it's sometimes tough to find a place to park in Oakland, that those neuro tests aren't always fun, that fasting can be a b\*tch, and that what we pay our volunteers isn't a lot.

But we want you back – we need you back. We are happy to discuss any barriers that might prevent you from coming in - we can probably find a solution. And for those who live far away and can't physically come in on a regular basis, we have some creative alternatives – just ask us!

John Donne said that no man is an island. We are all in this together. And with your participation, we become more than just the sum of our parts and can continue to do great things.

Please give us a call at 412-624-2008 or 1-800-987-1963.

### The Pitt Men's Study

P.O. Box 7319, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

(412) 624-2008 (800) 987-1963

<http://pittmensstudy.com/>

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News and Notes is published by the Pitt Men's Study. All information and opinions are the sole responsibility of the Study and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the University of Pittsburgh or the National Institutes of Health.

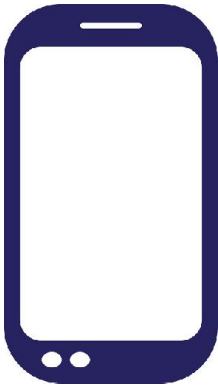
# “An Identity to Call Their Own” Series Nominated for GLADD Media Award

A series of six Pittsburgh Post-Gazette articles focusing on the lives of transgender individuals, including Pitt Men’s Study clinician technician Jessica McGuinness, was recently nominated for Best Newspaper Article by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

The series of three articles, “An Identity to Call Their Own,” was written by Michael A. Fuoco and focuses on six individual stories, including the moving testimonials of activists Jessica McGuinness, Sarah Parlow and Rayden Sorock. You can find the nominated series on the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Website: <http://newsinteractive.post-gazette.com/longform/stories/identity/>

The GLADD Media Awards honors film, television and print media for their “fair, accurate and inclusive representations of the LGBT community.”

## Apps and STDs



A new research study published on June 12 in the journal *Sexually Transmitted Infections* reports men who have sex with men, who use smartphone apps like Grindr and Scruff to find sexual partners, are more likely to become infected with chlamydia and gonorrhea (as compared to men who met in bars or clubs). The research was led by Matthew Beymer of the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center, Los Angeles,

and included nearly 7,200 local gay and “bi-curious” men.

The authors of the new study also say the use of these technologies may raise the chances of anonymous and risky sexual encounters and the likelihood of getting an STD.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends annual testing for syphilis, HIV, gonorrhea, and chlamydia in men who have sex with men. It’s common to have an STD but have no symptoms at all. You may want to talk to your doctor about getting screened for STDs or click on the link below to find local testing centers.

For information on where to get tested for an STD, you can search by zip code on the CDC Website (<http://hivtest.cdc.gov/>). You can find out more about STDs, including HIV, at our Website [m4mHealthySex.org](http://m4mHealthySex.org).

*This article was originally distributed via our Health Alert email list. Individuals interested in subscribing to the service can send an email to [PMS@stophiv.pitt.edu](mailto:PMS@stophiv.pitt.edu) with the word “subscribe” in the subject line.*

## Oral HPV Study Update



Gargle, swish, gargle, swish...

Over the last few years, many of our participants have been asked to provide a throat wash sample which we obtain by having them gargle and rinse with a small cup of saline solution. With this test we are looking for the presence of the oral human papillomavirus for our Persistence of Oral Papillomavirus Study (POPS).

Pittsburgh is one of 10 sites that is participating in this study across the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study and the Women’s Interagency HIV Study.

This study is looking at risk factors of acquiring oral HPV and also at factors that determine why some are individuals are more likely to clear the HPV infection than others.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) causes the majority of oral cancers in the United States and yet the risk factors and natural history of oral HPV infection and largely unknown. The majority of cases of oral HPV are cleared within two years due to the body’s own defense mechanisms.

Oral HPV is largely transmitted through oral sex and rimming which allows the virus to enter the mouth. A higher risk of incidence of oral HPV has been shown individuals who are HIV-infected, have a higher number of oral sex partners, and have not had a tonsillectomy.

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# You & Your Data

Questions, blood, urine, mental tests, even cups full of spit - we collect a lot from our volunteers at Pitt Men's Study appointments. So where does all that info go and what do we do with it? Below are some recent articles that appeared in scientific journals using data that you provided for us. The results aren't always groundbreaking or newsworthy - science generally moves in baby steps rather than strides - however without you and your data, none of these articles would exist.

Title of Article	Journal & Publication Date	The Gist of It
HIV infection is associated with progression of subclinical carotid atherosclerosis.	Clinical Infectious Diseases. 2015 Apr 22. [Epub ahead of print]	The long-term consequences of infection, treatment and immunological dysfunction are poorly understood in HIV-infected individuals. This study looked at positive and negative people (including Pitt Men's Study men) who underwent artery ultrasound imaging in 2004-2013. It concluded that HIV infection is associated with greater risk in focal plaque (thickening of the arteries) among men and women.
Lung cancer incidence and survival among HIV-infected and uninfected women and men.	AIDS. 2015 Apr 17. [Epub ahead of print]	This study looked at incidences of lung cancer and survival time among HIV-infected and uninfected women and men. The data suggests that lung damage and inflammation associated with HIV infection may be a factor for increased risk of lung cancer, and concluded that encouraging and assisting younger HIV-infected smokers to quit and continue to abstain from smoking is an important factor in reducing the lung cancer burden in this population.
Effects of syndemics on HIV viral load and medication adherence in the multicentre AIDS cohort study.	AIDS. 2015 Apr 13. [Epub ahead of print]	This study (investigated by past PMS employee Mack Friedman!) looked to determine associations between intertwining epidemics (such as substance use, depression symptoms and sexual risk behavior), HIV medication adherence and viral load levels among HIV-positive men who have sex with men. Its findings suggested that integrating mental healthcare, sexual risk prevention, and substance use interventions into standard HIV care may be necessary to provide the best HIV treatment.

## Oral HPV Study Update

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Those who have a lower CD4 count (the body's helper cells) are also more at risk.

The results of this study so far have shown that smoking increases the risk of someone getting oral HPV because smoking damages tissues in the mouth, making them more susceptible to the virus. Older age and male gender also increase the risk of persistent HPV.

There is no treatment at this time for oral HPV and screening is primarily done at the research level.

This study would not be possible without all the samples and the volunteers who do the oral rinses for us. Thank you for your participation!

Goodbye!

I am very sad to announce that I have accepted another position and will no longer be part of the Pitt Men's Study. I truly cherish my time here with all of you and I will miss you greatly.

I wish all of you continued health and happiness!

-Adrienne Guerke, CRNP



# From the Archives...

1984

*Special Invitation  
to Help Yourself and Others*

## STOP AIDS

*Just fill out the special self-mail envelope in June  
subscription/newsstand editions of Out, or...*

**Call the Pitt Men's Study  
(412) 624-2008**

PAGE C6 / OUT / JUNE 1984

1985

**"I WON'T GET AIDS  
BECAUSE..."**

I WASH AFTER SEX

I'M NOT PROMISCUOUS

THERE'S NO AIDS IN PITTSBURGH

I ONLY DATE CLEAN MEN

I ONLY GO OUT WITH MEN I KNOW

IF I DIDN'T GET IT YET I WON'T

**THESE WON'T PREVENT AIDS  
FIND OUT WHAT WILL**

**Call (412) 624-2008**

**TO JOIN PITT'S AIDS PREVENTION PROJECT**

1986

## AIDS IS 100% PREVENTABLE

The U.S. Public Health Service States that an effective vaccine or treatment will not be available before 1990.

Learn what you and your friends can do to protect yourselves today

**JOIN OUR  
AIDS PREVENTION PROJECT  
AND LEARN HOW TO STAY HEALTHY**

Gay and Bisexual Men Can Call **(412) 624-2008** For More Information

**SUPPORT RESEARCH ON AIDS**

Undated early recruitment poster

# AIDS

ARE YOU AT RISK FOR GETTING AIDS IN PITTSBURGH?

THE U.S. NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH IS SOLICITING PROPOSALS TO INVESTIGATE THE RISKS OF ACQUIRING AIDS (ACQUIRED IMMUNODEFICIENCY SYNDROME) IN GAY MALES. WE, A GROUP OF SCIENTISTS AND PHYSICIANS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH, WISH TO RESPOND TO THIS REQUEST BY ESTABLISHING AN AIDS CLINIC. IN OUR PROPOSED STUDY, GAY MALE VOLUNTEERS WOULD BE ENROLLED, MEDICALLY EXAMINED AND FOLLOWED FOR TWO AND ONE HALF YEARS WITH THE BEST MEDICAL TECHNIQUES AVAILABLE TO DETECT AIDS.

IN ORDER FOR US TO HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF RECEIVING THE FUNDS, WE NEED TO PROVE THAT WE HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE GAY COMMUNITY IN PITTSBURGH. WE URGE ALL GAY OR BISEXUAL MALES WHO WOULD BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE TO CONTACT US AT 624-2008. IF YOU PREFER, YOU MAY MAIL THE ATTACHED FORM TO US.

WE ASK THAT YOU PROVIDE US WITH A NAME AND A PHONE NUMBER OR ADDRESS. AFTER THE STUDY IS APPROVED AND FUNDED, WE WILL CONTACT YOU.

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE HELD IN STRICT CONFIDENCE.

Yes, I am interested in participating in a study on AIDS.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

AIDS RESEARCH GROUP,  
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

1991

**Haven't Been Back  
for Your  
Pitt Men's Study Visit  
in a Long Time?**

Things Have Changed: Please Call.

1. Less Blood is Taken
2. Stool is Not Required
3. Semen, Throatwash and Urine are not Routinely Collected.
4. Volunteers Receive a \$5.00 Parking Reimbursement.
5. Time for each Visit is Cut by 43%.
6. We Now Have Monday Hours.
7. We Have Fresh Brewed Coffee and Polar Water.

**Just call (412) 624-2008 to schedule an appointment.**