Bay Area Perinatal AIDS Center (BAPAC): A Center of Hope, Help and Prevention

Last December, as she does every year, Deb Cohan eagerly anticipated the winter holidays—and not for the most obvious reasons. That's when Cohan, the medical director of the Bay Area Perinatal AIDS Center (BAPAC), got to reconnect with her former patients and their thriving children at the annual San Francisco AIDS Foundation holiday party. Were it not for BAPAC, these families' holidays might not have been so cheery.

Through a full complement of prenatal medical, social and educational services, BAPAC helps women and families infected and affected by HIV. As part of the Positive Health Program at San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center (SFGH), the BAPAC team effectively and compassionately guides clients from preconception counseling through delivery of healthy HIV-negative babies.

Established in 1989, BAPAC has helped to virtually eliminate perinatal HIV in San Francisco. Early on, BAPAC clients and their infants played a key role in research by volunteering in trials that showed that AZT markedly reduced the transmission of HIV from HIV-positive pregnant women to their babies (a.k.a. vertical transmission). Since then, researchers have developed Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART) medications that prevent the vertical transmission of HIV. Cohan explains that if these women were not treated with effective antiretroviral therapies, the chances of their transmitting HIV to their babies would be about 25 percent. With medication, doctors are able to control the virus, bringing the risk of transmission down to less than one percent.

While the medical treatment is relatively straightforward, myriad psychosocial influences can complicate the issue of HIV prevention for BAPAC clients.

"Much of the emphasis in HIV care and prevention has been on men. But women, particularly pregnant women, have their own distinct needs," explains Cohan. "A pregnant woman who has HIV might have other children. She's used to caring for others before herself. She might be head of the household and distracted by numerous life commitments."

Continued on Page 2

Rosa: A Case of Preparation, Determination and Love

Starting a family was something Rosa (not her real name) and her husband always knew they wanted to do. But with both of them being HIV positive and living in inadequate housing, they also knew they had some tough challenges ahead of them. Through their own fortitude and with help from the Bay Area Perinatal AIDS Clinic (BAPAC), the couple—and their healthy HIV-negative baby boy—are now settling into solid family life.

In 2005, Rosa was diagnosed with an acute HIV infection by San Francisco General Hospital (SFGH) doctors. She was referred for primary care at Ward 86, the adult HIV clinic at SFGH. Rosa's husband tested positive soon after and became a patient at Ward 86, as well.

Rosa had no children, nor had she ever been pregnant. She had always wanted to have a family, though, and began discussing this with her primary care provider approximately two years into her care. Her doctor referred Rosa to BAPAC, which provided her with preconception consultation and education. Determined to have a healthy baby, Rosa started taking antiretroviral
BAPAC
Continued from Page 1

“Those of us who work at BAPAC are trained to address these needs. We take a holistic approach to each woman’s health, addressing not only the medical care, but the real-life issues and challenges she faces,” says Cohan. “We emphasize that the best way for women to take care of their kids is to take care of themselves.”

Contrary to popular belief, most BAPAC clients don’t have the traditional risk factors, such as IV drug use or work in the sex industry, associated with the virus. Many are under the age of 30. Within BAPAC are two general client populations: women who already know they have HIV and become pregnant; and women who are newly diagnosed with HIV.

For the first group, those who already know they have HIV, BAPAC begins by providing preconception counseling.

“We help them decide if and when they want to get pregnant,” says Cohan. “If not now, then we talk about how to use safe and effective contraception. We also provide gynecological care for HIV-infected women in our Positive Health Program.”

Half of BAPAC clients have just discovered they have HIV. Often their greatest challenge is living with the stigma of being a young mother with the virus. For many, they are the only person they know with HIV. While it’s common for most people to “freeze and take their time getting their mind around the diagnosis,” says Rebecca Schwartz, BAPAC’s Licensed Clinical Social Worker, “pregnant women diagnosed with HIV are on a different time line. They have to move quickly and get on medications.”

BAPAC’s bilingual staff serves as the critical link between medical and community resources, bringing the various components of care together for HIV-infected pregnant women.

“Our clients need help accessing services,” adds Schwartz. “Some need support to stabilize their lives. They want to be good mothers, of course, and we’re able to help them. We offer counseling and assistance with benefits and services that helps them in their home lives.”

Much of Schwartz’s efforts are spent educating mothers-to-be who are often unfamiliar with medical terminology and methods.

“A lot of our women, especially immigrants, have had minimal exposure to the medical system. Many have had home births, and never had a Pap smear,” she says. “I do a lot of interpreting, explaining what the medical suppliers are trying to provide. We talk about T cells and how to keep viral loads down. We teach them ways to minimize the risk to their babies.”

Both Schwartz and BAPAC Nurse Practitioner Cynthia Feakins work in the San Francisco General Family HIV Clinic as well as at BAPAC. Their experience at the clinic helps them provide family-centered care, involving not just the woman and her baby, but her partner and other significant people in her life.

For more than a quarter century, San Francisco General Hospital has been a leader in the treatment of HIV and AIDS. In 1983, SFGH physicians established the world’s first AIDS clinic on SFGH’s Ward 86 to treat what was first seen as an epidemic among gay men.

They also opened the first outpatient clinic there, now known as the Positive Health Program (PHP), to treat the greater HIV-positive community. As time wore on, researchers saw increasing numbers of women and children diagnosed with HIV. In 1989 BAPAC was established, under the PHP umbrella, to address the complex medical and social issues faced by women with HIV.

Not all of BAPAC’s work is carried out at San Francisco General. Staff have visited clients in their homes or hotels to ensure they are receiving the best possible care. Feakins also runs a health education group at the county jail to help high-risk women remain HIV-negative.

Certainly, those who work at BAPAC have learned a great deal about perinatal HIV. Part of their charge is educating others in...
the field, OB/GYN fellows are trained at San Francisco General in reproductive infectious disease; they then go on to provide care elsewhere in the United States and abroad.

“We know that interdisciplinary care is effective,” says Cohan. “By training health care providers in this model, we can have a ripple effect in preventing the spread of HIV.”

To that end, Cohan serves as the associate director of the National Perinatal HIV Consultation and Referral Service, based at SFGH. Staffed by specially trained obstetricians, pharmacists, HIV experts and family practice physicians, the hotline offers round-the-clock expert consultation for clinicians caring for HIV-positive women and their infants.

Cohan and her staff have even helped to change a California law. Last year, they worked with State Senator Carole Migden to overturn a ban on sperm from HIV-positive men for the purposes of assistive reproduction. Enacted in 1989, the ban was intended to help prevent the spread of HIV from a positive partner to a negative one. But for more than a decade medical technology has existed to “wash” the HIV from sperm; the cleansed sperm can then be used to impregnate a consenting woman. Sperm washing enables both the mother and child to remain HIV-free.

“Our team is helping to establish standards of care for how to offer these services,” says Cohan, adding that, “The law was put on the books for good reason, but technology advanced beyond it.”

While progress in HIV prevention and care has been remarkable, Cohan and others in the field know there is still much to be done. BAPAC is part of an international network of perinatal research studies.

“There are very few conditions where we can say we’ve made this much progress. That said, there is a stark contrast between resource-rich settings and resource-limited ones. Worldwide, there is an unacceptable amount of HIV transmission. In much of Africa, women can’t access services.”

Cohan plans to travel to Africa this year to pursue research in international perinatal HIV.

“We’ve started collecting preliminary data for a trial of different HAART medications in pregnant women in rural Uganda,” she says. “Our ultimate goal is to provide cocktail regimens to women worldwide, not just in resource-rich settings.”

Meanwhile, Cohan reflects on the impact BAPAC has had on the lives of San Franciscans.

“A lot of women come to us suspicious of healthcare providers. We’ve been successful in helping them learn to trust the system,” she says. “Imagine how many hundreds of people have come through the program since the 1980s. If a quarter of them had passed HIV on to their babies...”

Cohan doesn’t need to finish the thought. She’s got patients to treat with babies yet to be born. As always, she looks forward to seeing them at the next San Francisco AIDS Foundation party, enjoying their holiday seasons.

“I am a photographer and I also run a Photography Rental house for Calumet Photographic, in San Francisco. After losing my father to cancer on November 12, 2007, I was invited to a performance of Attitude of Gratitude: Touched by Cancer, which is put on by the Cancer Awareness Resources Education (CARE) program at San Francisco General Hospital. I found the patients’ stories of how they cope with cancer deeply touching.

The next day I sent an email to Blue Walcer, Director of CARE, expressing my desire to help raise money for the program. I suggested a silent auction of photography from local artists. Over 80 artists donated framed photographs after hearing about the invaluable support and education CARE provides to cancer patients. The auction, titled Art for CARE, was a great success and surpassed our goals.

I look forward to an even bigger turnout next October.”

Brian Holliday
Photographer
www.brianholliday.com
Grants Received in 2008

- **The San Francisco Foundation:** $50,000 in support of Cancer Awareness Support Education (CARE) program to provide English, Cantonese and Spanish education and support groups for SFGH cancer patients.

- **DePuy Orthopaedics:** $65,000 to support SFGH Orthopaedic Resident Education and a Orthopaedic Trauma Fellow.

- **Junior League of San Francisco:** $1,500 to establish an arts therapy curriculum program for the CASARC program.

- **San Francisco Arts Commission:** $15,000 to support the Araceli Theatre Project of the CARE program.

- **California Pacific Medical Center:** Three separate grants and award totaling $60,000 to support the SFGH CARE, the Family Health Center and the Chinatown Public Health Center.

- **Mimi and Peter Haas Fund:** $30,000 to provide staff administrative and social worker staff support for the Bay Area Perinatal AIDS Center (BAPAC).

- **California HealthCare Foundation:** $250,000 over two years to implement a Palliative Care Consult Service at SFGH.

- **Avon Foundation:** $1,150,000 to the Hematology, Oncology and Radiology Departments at SFGH to provide screening, treatment, navigation, support services, access to trials and outreach to low-income women who are at high risk of breast cancer or who currently have the disease.

- **Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation:** $4,035,764 to develop and implement a new transitional care program for the elderly at San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center (SFGH). Known as “Support from Hospital to Home for the Elderly (SHHE),” the program’s aim is to improve outcomes and lower rates of hospital readmission for patients over 65 years of age through better transitional care from hospital to home. A $40,000 grant was also awarded to provide for an outside consultant to assess the hospital’s readiness for Magnet status designation. Magnet status designation is extremely desirable among hospitals for nursing recruitment and retention.

- **Kadima Foundation:** $250,000 to benefit the Division of Orthopaedic Surgery.
The 9th annual Staff Appreciation Luncheon was a huge success! At the luncheon, the SFGH Foundation awarded over $800,000 in funding support to programs at The General. Grants were awarded to 15 programs, representing a diverse range of programs and services, as well as capital improvements and technological upgrades, all intended to improve and enhance patient care and comfort at SFGH. Several of the grants will fund first-time projects in the areas of HIV/AIDS, Pediatrics and Hematology/Oncology, while others will support existing programs.

Among the new projects receiving funding: the HIV Patient Education Program, an interdisciplinary program aimed at increasing health literacy, improving clinical outcomes and reducing hospital admissions, received the largest of the awards, $213,250. A grant of $25,000 was given to the Medical-Legal Partnership, a joint effort of SFGH’s Pediatrics Department and Bay Area Legal Aid that will provide proactive legal assistance for children of low-income families.

For a complete list of the awardees please contact Sara E. Haynes, Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations For SFGHF at 415.206.4478 or shaynes@sfghf.net.
San Francisco General Hospital Foundation

Statement of Financial Position

December 31, 2007 with comparative totals for 2006

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<th>2007</th>
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Complete audited Financial Statements as of December 30, 2007 and 2006 are located on the Foundation's website, www.sfghf.net
Thank You

The San Francisco General Hospital Foundation gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our donors for their gifts for the period January 1, 2007 to December 30, 2007

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Nancy Lim-Yee
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Tommie Mayfield
In honor of Christmas
Stephen Wilscott
In honor of Calvin Chu
Lily Chu
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James and Paty Ludwig
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Jared Doumani
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Philip Darney, MD and Una Landy, PhD
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Carole S. and Harold F. Elkin
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Kenneth Ong
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Alfred Galindo
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In honor of Cecille Malak
Monique Ninove
In honor of Dr. R. Trigg McClellan
Maribel R. Boucher
In honor of George D. Meyer, MD
Amy Mey er
In honor of the Myers-Henry Wedding
Dana Myers
In honor of Kimberly Newell, MD
Ronald Armstrong
In honor of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Newman
Melia Zellbacher and Lee Monson
In honor of Patricia O’Brien
Susan and Lillian Silver
In honor of Margaret Olson
Lone Berson
In honor of Dr. Kena Pastick
Allen E. King
In honor of Steven J. Pennoti
Ursula D. Pennoti
In honor of Mike Phillips
Kathryn Supple and Thomas B. Klein
In honor of Casey Raffaei
Stephanie Candelli
In honor of Dr. Laura Robertson
William S. and Sakurako Fisher
Nancy Gnaulman
John Roediger
In honor of Sylvia Rose
Lynda Willow
In honor of Loren Schaller
Linda Schaller
In honor of William Schecter, MD
Myles B. Abbott MD and Ida Abbott
Robert and Bridget Lyons
Jennifer L. Provine
In honor of Paula Carion Schultz
Leo and Alice Fathy
Carol Landa
Judy Schulte
In honor of Jan Shaposhire
Marcie Chee
Anna Loo Chew
Lily Chin
Patricia Erwin
Yvonne Gee
Karen Hagen
Patricia Jing
Sharon Shumjni Kong
Julianne Lee
Pauline Lee
Nancy Lew
Walter McCull and Mary Barber-McCall
Mary Anne McGuire-Hockey
Madeleine Ritchie
Brenda Scott
Rita H. Times, RN
Doris Tom
Maria Wilson
Jennie Wuu
Ming Wu
In honor of Dr. Strachowski
Customink.com
In honor of Richard Strong
Betty Strong Coover
In honor of Ron and Charlie Thomas
Eric Woodhouse
In honor of Julia Tinley’s Bat Mitzvah
Linda Ratter
In honor and memory of Dr. Torello
Sarah J. and John M. McCusky
In honor of Beth Veniai
Elron Heller
Amy Silberman
In honor of Krista and Kevin Ward
Sonja Bajjadiah
Stephanie S. Chen
Ricky Y. Choi
Robert Choy
Linda Cristell-Joy
Christopher B. and Kimberly A. Condon
Suzanne C. Crawford
Nicholas Goldman and Bryan Kelley
Han K. Kim and Jessica J. Bryan
Song Leng and Hong Liu
Susan Lyman
Carla M. and Robert J. Ring
Michael S. Shields
In honor of James Cummings and Mary Ellen Fayed
Pamela Duncan
In honor of Antonette Griffin, RN, MS and Janice Pappel, RN, PhD
Laurie Barkin and Brian Bromhal.
In honor of the Ginotti/Hollingshead Families
Margery A. Ginotti
In honor of the Heroes & Hearts Luncheon
John and Laura Fisher
In honor of my 80th Birthday
Elizabeth Richard
San Francisco General Hospital Foundation
2789 25th Street, Suite 2028
San Francisco, CA 94110
www.sfghf.net

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San Francisco General Hospital Foundation

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