



**San Diego HIV  
Community Consortium**

*Community Health Education*

**HIV & Aging Symposium 2026**

February 7, 2026 · Annenberg Health Sciences Building · Eisenhower Health

# Key Takeaways for Our Community

Advances in HIV Care for People Living and Aging with HIV

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Presented by

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**Community Education Coordinator & Program Liaison,**

San Diego HIV Community Consortium

**Board Member,**

POZabilities

**Senior Services Program Manager,**

The San Diego LGBT Community Center

# About the Symposium

## What Was This Event?

Half-day symposium on HIV care for aging populations

Hosted at Eisenhower Health

February 7, 2026

## Topics Covered

-  Brain Health
-  Heart Health
-  Metabolic Health
-  Trauma & Addiction
-  Bone Health
-  Cancer Risk and Screening
-  Prostate Health

## Featured Speakers



**Scott Letendre, MD**

**HIV & Brain Health**

Professor of Medicine &  
Psychiatry, UC San Diego  
Owen Clinic



**Dipti Itchhaporia, MD**

**HIV & Cardiovascular  
Health**

Past President, American  
College of Cardiology ·  
Hoag Heart & Vascular  
Institute



**Joshua R. Gonzalez,  
MD**

**Urology & Sexual  
Health**

Board-Certified Urologist  
· UCLA/San Diego Sexual  
Medicine

# Brain Health & Cognitive Wellness

Dr. Scott Letendre · UC San Diego Owen Clinic

 *Brain health is about more than memory — mood and daily function matter just as much.*



## Vascular Depression

Blood vessel health directly affects mood and memory



## Mood Changes Matter

Emotional shifts are early signs of brain stress, not just "feeling down"



## Trauma's Long Reach

Past trauma and addiction leave lasting effects on the brain — even after recovery



## Test Thoughtfully

*"Don't test unless you know what to do with the result" — Dr. Letendre*

Clinical Insight from  
 **Scott Letendre, MD**  
Board-Certified Infectious Disease

## What This Means For You

-  Tell your doctor about mood changes, not just memory concerns
-  Share your full health history — including past trauma or addiction
-  Ask about CD<sub>4</sub>/CD8 ratio as a marker of immune and brain health
-  Regular check-ins matter more than one-time tests

# ♥ Trauma, Addiction & Whole-Person Care

🔄 Your history is part of your health. Trauma and addiction — even in the past — continue to shape your brain and body today.



## Trauma Effects

Past trauma raises chronic stress hormones, affecting the brain, heart, and immune system — long after the event



## Addiction's Legacy

Substance use history leaves lasting changes in brain chemistry and increases risk for cognitive and cardiovascular issues



## Recovery Matters

Recovery doesn't erase these effects — but it opens the door to healing and reduces ongoing risk



## Whole-Person Care

Your care team should see all of you



### Mental Health

Therapy, counseling, psychiatric care



### Physical Health

HIV care, cardiology, primary care



### Addiction Support

Non-judgmental substance use care



### Community

Peer support, social connection



### Spiritual / Cultural

Culturally affirming care

*Ask your provider about integrated care options in San Diego*

# Urology and Sexual Health – Part 1

Clinical Insight from Dr. Joshua R. Gonzalez, MD, Board-Certified Urologist

💡 *Testosterone Therapy: What You Need To Know*

## ⚡ Why It Matters

Many people with HIV experience low testosterone (hypogonadism), which can affect:

- Energy levels and fatigue
- Muscle mass and strength
- Mood and mental health
- Sexual function and libido
- Bone Density

## 🕒 The Trade-Offs Continued...

Potential Risks:

- Cardiovascular effects
- Prostate health concerns
- Fertility impacts
- Sleep apnea worsening
- Mood changes or irritability
- Skin reactions (acne, oily skin)

## ⚠️ The Trade-Offs (Often Undiscussed)

Potential Benefits:

- Improved energy and mood
- Increased muscle mass
- Enhanced sexual function
- Better quality of life

## 🩺 Before Starting Testosterone

Have a careful conversation with your doctor:

- Discuss your symptoms and goals
- Review your complete medical history
- Understand the risks and benefits specific to you.
- Get baseline lab work (PSA, blood counts, lipids)
- Plan for ongoing monitoring

Recommended Reading:

### “5 Things Doctors Wish Men Knew About Sexual Health”

New York Times, January 2026

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/21/well/live/mens-sexual-urologists-advice.html>

## 📋 Questions to Ask:

- 📋 What are my testosterone levels now?
- 📋 What are the specific risks for me given my health history?
- 📋 How will we monitor for side effects?
- 📋 What happens if I want to stop treatment?
- 📋 Are there alternatives to testosterone therapy?

## Talk to Your Provider:

Sexual health is an essential part of overall health – don't hesitate to bring up concerns about:

- Sexual function
- Hormone levels
- Screening for cancers (anal, prostate)
- Any urological symptoms

# 🛡️ Urology and Sexual Health – Part 2

## Anal Cancer Screening: High-Resolution Anoscopy (HRA)

### ⚡ What Is HRA?

A specialized procedure that detects precancerous cells in the anal canal before they become cancer.

### How It Works?

- Uses magnification and special training to identify abnormal cells
- Detects HSIL (high-grade squamous intraepithelial lesions) – precancerous changes
- Abnormal blood vessels in HSIL lesions make them visible during HRA
- Serious enough to treat, but caught before cancer develops

### The Transition Zone

HRA examines the transition from squamous to columnar cells in the anal canal - the area where precancerous changes most often occur.

### The Paradox

HIV-positive men may be diagnosed with prostate cancer less often – but possibly because PSA screening isn't happening routinely enough.

### The Problem

When prostate cancer is found, it's often caught later despite the high level of medical attention people with HIV receive.

## 🔑 Who Should Be Screened?

### 📦 Anal Cancer Screening (HRA)

- Men who have sex with men (MSM) with HIV – age 35+
- All other people living with HIV – age 45+
- Anyone with symptoms (pain, bleeding, masses)

### ✅ Prostate Cancer Screening (PSA)

- Men living with HIV over 50
- Earlier screening (age 40) if family history of prostate cancer
- Ask your provider about routine PSA testing

## What You Can Do

- ✅ Ask your HIV provider about anal cancer screening if you are in a high-risk group
- ✅ Request a PSA test at your next visit if you are over 50 (or 40 with family history)
- ✅ Report any anal symptoms immediately – pain, bleeding, or masses
- ✅ Don't assume screening is happening automatically – advocate for yourself
- ❖ ***Anal cancer screening is relevant for all people living with HIV, regardless of gender.***

# Women Living & Aging with HIV: Essential Health Considerations

## Clinical Priorities

### ♥ Cardiovascular Risk

- Women with HIV face disproportionately higher CVD risk than HIV-negative women
- The gender gap is larger in women than in men with HIV
- Know your numbers: blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar

### 🔬 Cervical Cancer Screening

- HPV-related; lifetime screening recommended for women with HIV
- Do not skip Pap smears — even if you feel well
- Discuss HRA (anal canal screening) with your provider as well

### 👩 Reproductive & Hormonal Health

- Accelerated menopause is common in women with HIV
- Hormone therapy (HRT) interactions with ART require careful management
- Pregnancy planning should involve your HIV specialist

## Often Overlooked

### 🧠 Mental Health Burden

- Women with HIV carry higher rates of depression and trauma
- Mental health screening should be routine, not reactive
- Ask your provider — don't wait to be asked

### 💊 "Is It All About Testosterone? How About Estrogen?"

- Estrogen plays a critical role in bone density, cardiovascular health, and mood
- Women with HIV may need earlier conversations about hormonal health
- HRT options exist — discuss risks and benefits with your provider

### 👊 Self-Advocacy Tip

- Women's health concerns are often underrepresented in HIV research
- Bring up gender-specific concerns at every visit
- You deserve care that reflects your whole health picture

***Women living with HIV are not a footnote — their health needs deserve dedicated attention.***

# 🛡️ Bone Health — Protect Your Foundation

## ↗️ Significantly Higher Risk

Women living with HIV face elevated rates of osteopenia and osteoporosis compared to the general population

— HIV & Aging Symposium 2026

## ⓘ Key Risk Factors

- 🕒 **Age** — Bone density naturally declines over time
- ☀️ **Low Vitamin D** — Common in people living with HIV
- **Low Body Weight** — Less mechanical load on bones
- 🔗 **Some HIV Medications** — Certain ART can affect bone density
- ⚡ **HIV Itself** — Chronic inflammation contributes to bone loss

## 📋 Recommended Screening

### DXA Scan

*(A painless bone density X-ray — ask your doctor if you qualify)*

Especially recommended for women living with HIV, people over 50, and those with multiple risk factors

## ✅ What You Can Do

- 👉 Ask your HIV provider about a DXA bone density scan
- 👉 Get your Vitamin D levels checked at your next visit
- 👉 Consider weight-bearing exercise (walking, light weights)
- 👉 Discuss your ART regimen's effect on bone health
- 👉 Track immune health — CD4/CD8 ratio links to fracture risk

# ♥ Heart Health — Part 1

## Why Cardiovascular Disease Matters More for People Living with HIV

Dr. Dipti Itchhaporia · Past President, American College of Cardiology

### The Core Problem

#### HIV Increases CVD Risk

Even with an undetectable viral load, HIV raises the risk of heart disease

#### Aging Accelerated

People living with HIV often develop heart conditions 10+ years earlier than the general population

#### Invisible Inflammation

Chronic inflammation from HIV silently damages blood vessels over time



#### Chronic Inflammation

*(Ongoing low-level "fire" in the body)*

HIV triggers a continuous immune response that stresses the heart and arteries — even when the virus is suppressed



#### Immune Activation

*(Your immune system stays in "fight mode")*

A constantly activated immune system accelerates plaque buildup in arteries — a key driver of heart attacks and strokes

#### Dipti Itchhaporia, MD

 Interventional Cardiologist · Hoag Heart & Vascular Institute



*"Early and sustained viral suppression is one of the most powerful tools we have to protect the heart."*

— HIV & Aging Symposium 2026

#### The Good News

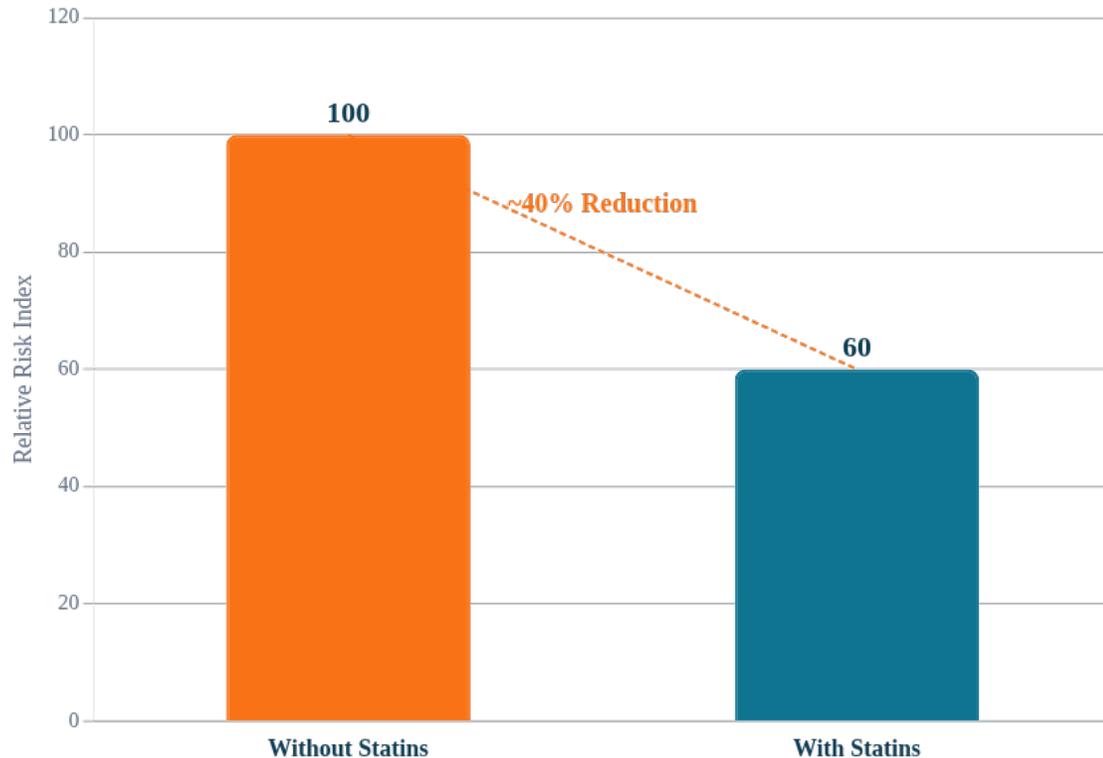
Staying undetectable directly reduces the inflammation that harms your heart

# ↪ Heart Health — Part 2

## Practical Steps to Protect Your Heart

### Statins Significantly Reduce Heart Attack Risk

Strong evidence for people living with HIV — ask your doctor



Relative risk index — 100 = baseline risk without statins (per symposium data)



#### Statins

Ask your doctor about statins — they cut heart attack risk by ~40% in high-risk individuals

**Strong Evidence**



#### Exercise

Regular cardiovascular exercise (walking, swimming, cycling) significantly reduces mortality risk

**Do It Daily**



#### ART Selection

Talk to your provider about choosing HIV medications with fewer metabolic side effects

**Ask Your Provider**



#### Manage Risk Factors

Aggressively control blood pressure, cholesterol, and smoking. These multiply heart risk.

**Take Control**

# Metabolic Health & Modern Treatments

## Treatment Breakthrough

### GLP-1 Medications

(e.g., Semaglutide / Ozempic® / Wegovy®)

A new class of medications transforming care for people living with HIV who struggle with weight or metabolic syndrome

-  Significant, sustained weight loss
-  Improved heart and metabolic health
-  Reduces cardiovascular risk factors
-  Better quality of life

*Talk to your HIV provider about whether GLP-1 medications may be right for you*

## HIV Treatment Has Come a Long Way

### Then

Multiple pills, multiple times a day — complex schedules, significant side effects, difficult to maintain

### Now

Once-daily single-pill regimens — simpler, more tolerable, and just as effective

## Why It Matters

-  Better medication adherence (taking pills consistently)
-  Fewer metabolic side effects
-  Improved quality of life
-  ART selection now includes cardiovascular risk assessment

*Today's HIV medications are more effective and better tolerated than ever before.*

# ✔ What You Can Do — Starting Today



## Talk to Your Doctor

- ✔ Ask about your CD4/CD8 ratio at your next visit
- ✔ Request a DXA bone density scan if you're at risk
- ✔ Discuss statin therapy for heart protection
- ✔ Ask if GLP-1 medications could help with weight or metabolic health
- ✔ Review your ART regimen for cardiovascular safety



## Lifestyle Steps

- ✔ Move your body daily — even a 30-min walk counts
- ✔ Quit or reduce smoking — it multiplies heart risk
- ✔ Eat heart-healthy: more plants, less processed food
- ✔ Get enough sleep — it affects brain and immune health
- ✔ Stay consistent with your HIV medications



## Mind & Community

- ✔ Tell your provider about mood changes and stress
- ✔ Share your trauma and addiction history with your care team
- ✔ Join a peer support group in San Diego
- ✔ Ask about mental health counseling referrals
- ✔ Stay connected — social support protects your health

# 📍 San Diego Resources & Next Steps

## HIV Specialty Care



### UC San Diego Owen Clinic

Comprehensive HIV care and research. San Diego's leading HIV clinic.

<https://health.ucsd.edu/care/hiv/>

## Community Support



### San Diego HIV Community Consortium

Education, advocacy, and connection for people living with HIV in San Diego.

*Your community home base*

## Immediate Help



### HIV Care and Services Resources – County of San Diego

*General Info Line: (619) 293-4700*

### California Office of AIDS – HIV Care Program (HCP)

*Phone: (916) 449-5900*

## Community Connection



### Peer Support Programs

Connect with others who understand your journey — ask your care team for local referrals.

*Ask your Care Team for referrals*



## You Are Not Alone

Living with HIV today means living with more knowledge, better tools, and a community that has your back.

- ✔ Ask questions at every appointment
- ✔ Know your numbers — CD4, viral load, cholesterol
- ✔ Bring a support person to medical visits
- ✔ Stay engaged with your community

*Knowledge is power. Community is strength. You deserve the best care.*

**Thank you for being here today.**