



HIV *Update*

San Francisco

A publication for KPSF members from Health Education

MARCH 2008

Healing your *Spirit...*

By Darren Main

Spirituality is so important to those of us who are HIV+. But what is it and how do we

find it? In my experience, spirituality is a unique and personal decision. Sometimes we can express it at a church or synagogue, but being involved in a religion doesn't necessarily mean you are spiritual and not being part of a formal religion doesn't mean you don't have it. Spirituality is internal and deeply personal. Like being in love, it is not something you can describe easily. In fact, like being in love, the only way to really understand spirituality is to experience it directly. And like love, it is not something that you get once and then the job is done. It is something that you must nurture and cultivate daily.

As a yoga teacher, I believe that all disease is not only physical but also spiritual. The yogis of ancient India have known this to be true for millennia and now modern science and Western medicine have begun to catch up. In fact, most nurses and doctors who work with life-challenging illnesses, such as cancer and HIV, will tell you that they notice that patients with a strong spiritual side respond to treatment much better than their less spiritual counterparts.

One of the things I realized about myself years ago is that even something as simple as HIV labs shift when I am spiritually centered. On one occasion, shortly after testing HIV+, I received



Darren Main

some lab results that were less than impressive. My CD4 count had dropped quite a bit and I felt waves of fear wash through me. My friend Jasper was meeting me for lunch and when I saw him, I began to cry.

After my breakdown began to subside, I managed to choke out what was bothering me. I explained to him that my numbers had dropped and I didn't know what to do. In his characteristically calm manner, he looked at me and asked a simple question. "How do you feel?" "Fine." I said. "In fact I've never felt better." "So what is the problem?" was his response. There was no fear in his eyes and no hesitation in his voice. Just like that, the heavy blanket of fear was lifted, and it has never returned.

Don't get me wrong — I'm not suggesting we abandon Western medicine, but it is important to remember that as human beings, our hearts and minds play a huge role in our physical health. Worrying about labs will never improve them.

The best way to develop spiritually is through daily spiritual practice. The yogis from India call this Sadhana, but you don't have to be a yogi to have a practice. Some find it through

Darren Main is a well-known yoga and meditation instructor and author. His books include "Yoga and the Path of the Urban Mystic," "Spiritual Journeys along the Yellow Brick Road," "The Findhorn Book of Meditation" and his forthcoming book "Hearts and Minds: Talking to Christians about Homosexuality." In addition to his writing, he facilitates workshops and gives talks on yoga and modern spirituality throughout the United States and abroad, and is the director of the Yoga Tree Teacher Training Program. He currently lives in San Francisco. Visit Darren's website at www.darrenmain.com

Christian or Jewish prayer. Others find it in Eastern practices such as Buddhist meditation, yoga or Tai Chi. Still others use visualization and meditation techniques. And others find their Sadhana with the help of a spiritually-focused counselor or therapist.

My mother, like most mothers, can't seem to help worrying about her children, and my HIV status has been more difficult for her than it has been for me. At one point, when she was distraught over my status, I told her that as soon as they do a study that proves worrying can strengthen a person's immune system, I will start to fret with her, but until then, living in fear can only stand in the way of my health as well as hers.

When we find a spiritual practice such as meditation, prayer or yoga or when we work with a spiritual counselor or clergy member, we can begin to calm the mind. This improves the quality of our lives almost immediately and it frees us to make informed choices about our health. With a spiritual foundation you can take into account how you feel, your labs, and your doctor's guidance and make important decisions about your health and every other aspect of your life. The key that unlocks the heavy door of fear is spiritual practice.

Recently I spoke with Christopher Love, M.A., a counselor based in San Francisco, and he had this to say: "Human beings tend to identify with the conditions they find themselves in — their money, their job, their looks or talents. When HIV is the condition, it is important to remember that someone is not just HIV+, but an individual who is experiencing many conditions, HIV being just one of them. In honoring the strength of the individual first, we give rise to all kinds of energy, initiative and choice to support and heal."

You can learn more about **Christopher Love's** counseling work at his website: www.lovechristopher.com or by calling his office at (415) 519-5683.

How To Meditate

The Buddha was once asked which meditation technique was the most effective. The master's response was both simple and profound. "The one you practice." Therefore, start your practice with this simple technique and explore others as well. The important thing is that you get started and that you practice consistently.

Sit in a comfortable upright position. Some people sit cross-legged, and others prefer to kneel. It is also acceptable to sit in a straight-backed chair. Allow your body to relax and take a few deep full breaths to shift into a quiet space.

As you begin to quiet down, focus on the sensation of the breath flowing in and out of the nose where it touches the upper lip. There is no need to change the quality of the breath. Simply watch it move in and out. You will find that the mind will frequently wander. This is natural. Once you notice that the mind has wandered, bring the mind gently back to the breath.

The whole process is one of bringing the mind back to the breath over and over again. Try not to be discouraged by how much the mind will wander. You have been letting your mind wander without discipline for many years. You can't expect it to sit still overnight. Rather than chastising yourself for letting your mind wander, praise yourself for noticing and gently bring it back.

— From *The Findhorn Book of Meditation* by Darren Main

In Their Own Words



Frank Sclafani

When asked by Frank Sclafani during a meeting of **Positive Life: An HIV Discussion and Support Group**

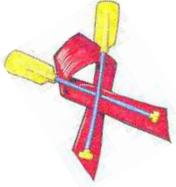
What have you found to be most helpful in your healing?

The responses were:

- Taking more personal responsibility.
- Having a pet.
- Being aware of how I see the world today, i.e., what color glasses am I wearing.
- Identify what is important in your life and who is important in your life.
- There is limited time and energy, so keep the good and let go of the bad.
- Have goals and a time-frame, yet be flexible with the goals. Set both daily and long-term goals. Artwork
- You are a person living with HIV. HIV doesn't define you.
- It isn't all black, all white.
- HIV has been a Guru to me; taught me some really good lessons.
- Don't limit your dreams and goals.
- Coming to this HIV Support Group.

For more information about the group, contact Frank Sclafani, MFT at (415) 833-8720.

Jesus Guillen: Healing Waters



Healing Waters is an organization to help lift people's spirits by inspiring and enriching their lives through wilderness adventures.

By Jesus Guillen

"Healing is not just to vanish a disease, but to adapt to what we cannot change."

It takes a while to understand that after a diagnosis of an illness, we are still the same person. However, we do have to make certain changes in our lifestyles, such as take certain medicines or there will be things that we cannot do any more. But for those things we cannot do, we can find many more that we can. Even in the things we can do, we must find places or groups that will be supportive of our experiences without judgments or having to explain ourselves over and over again. It's hard enough to make the adaptations to our daily lives with pills to take, doctors appointments, and, of course, our regular lab blood results, but to add on top of that, all the social implications of what seems to be another subdivision of a minority group. Are you positive or negative? We know that at least for now, we can not cure AIDS, and we also know that we don't have to like it, but we can cope with the best of our abilities if we have the support around us to walk this new chapter of our lives. Healing is not just to vanish a disease, but to adapt to what we cannot change.

"It's a whole new world"

We go around doing our normal routine. We work, we play, we love. We walk around the city, smiling or worrying about catching the next bus. It's a day like any other day, except that we have a doctor's appointment to check on some lab results. Then, in a matter of minutes, we're told: "you're HIV positive." Just a short phrase, just words, but how powerful words can be. You feel like someone just poured ice water over you. We're aware that in these days HIV is not a death sentence, but it doesn't matter because that ice water penetrated so deep it makes us forget the logic of reality and fears take complete control of our minds and bodies. We're in shock and and it's a whole new world.

"To fly or to stay on the ground?"

It might be very obvious, but sometimes we need to be reminded that when a disease as powerful as AIDS, or other ones like cancer become part a of us, it's not only the body that plays a part in the story, the spirit is also a major character in the script. We go to the doctor to check and try to adapt ourselves to our new circumstances with the hope to heal. Our minds and spirits sometimes get confused trying to combine what we know with what we feel, and what we feel sometimes isn't altered by what we know. I know, it sounds confusing, but it's a reflection of the confusion we're experiencing in those moments. Our bodies are like an egg: we have inside us the spirit of a bird that can fly, but sometimes we forget we can do that, even if we do have powerful wings. To fly or To stay on the ground? Sometimes even simple, every day decisions become complicated.



"A Breath of Fresh Air"

Like the rainbow of flavors in an ice cream parlor, there are many different kinds of groups that can help us with our coping skills. If you like outdoor activities, or need a breath of fresh air, one of the best groups around is Healing Waters. I have participated in many of their weekend or day trips, and I have to tell you, they are amazing! Not only does it feel wonderful to get out of the city and be surrounded by trees and hear the water running wild, but it is also nice to escape our daily routines. It also provides us with exercise that sometimes we don't do as much as we want, or as much as our bodies allow. All of our activities are done under the knowledgeable guidance of trained volunteers who make you feel welcome and part of a family. They'll lead you at your own pace and level of energy and experience even if you have never done rafting, or hiking or other outdoor activities. But there is also something else, something that is difficult to put in words. There is a feeling of connection, of belonging not only to a group, but to this earth. The human touch intertwining with the elements of nature, is magical. It's like a formula that a chemist has put together in a pill ready to heal. Somehow, in some unexpected way, with a smile, the healing spreads to our minds and bodies — maybe also affecting in a positive way the outcome of our disease making us forget for a moment a journey that hasn't been easy, but at the end is what it is — our journey.

Don't forget to take your pills, but don't forget to reach out to groups like Healing Waters. It's worth it!

Learn more about Healing Waters at www.hwaters.org. To contact Healing Waters, please call (415) 552-1190, or e-mail Jesus at asensualspirit@yahoo.com

Life was Better with Max

by Joseramon Aguilar

Eight years ago a friend knocked on my door, one October morning, with a one-year-old puppy. He was a beautiful white pit-bull terrier with brown spots. Even at the age of one you could tell his intelligence and his warmth. I was feeling depressed and immediately he sensed my anxiety and began to kiss me and lick my face. His kisses immediately invoked pleasant memories of a dog I had as a child. He was a Collie and we used to run in the coffee fields of Costa Rica.

The new puppy's name was Phoenix but that name somehow didn't fit him so he was soon Max and he liked his new name.

Dogs are healers. They help people cope with emotional issues. When you are lonely, they supply physical contact and warmth. But they are more than just companions and nurses. A Japanese study found pet owners made 30 percent fewer visits to their primary doctors.

As a man living with AIDS, depression seems to pop up unannounced — an unwelcomed guest in one's heart and mind. Max's ever-loving nature made him the perfect cure to depression. When Wellbutrin and Remeron failed, there was always Max standing by the door asking for a walk with a smile in his face. You could tell he was telling me, "hey buddy let's go for a walk around Lake Merritt, it will do you some good." Life was better with Max because dogs are the best antidepressant. I lost ten pounds since he and I began our long walks. When I was a vegetable in

front of the TV, he got me out for an hour or two to Joaquin Miller Park. My cholesterol was going down.

He would bark and bark until I got my ass off of the couch. It didn't matter what the weather was, soon we were out walking the trails in the Oakland Hills in the rain and he would disappear wagging his tail chasing a deer or a squirrel. Dogs do not judge people, Max never judged me

and the mental health benefits of living with him were incalculable. His unconditional love could really ease my stress and anxiety. Oh Max, I tried to

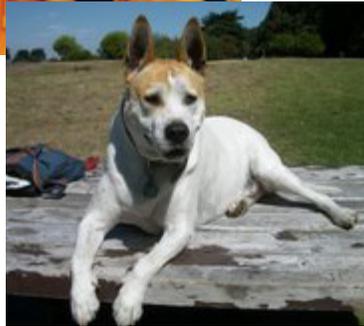
love you unconditionally too.

I put Max down two weeks ago. Yesterday I went back to the pet hospital and they gave me a beautiful pine box with his ashes.

When I was sick and had to have surgery, Max was there for me everyday. He spent countless hours with me in bed when I was too sick to get up. He understood we couldn't walk the lake or go to the trails. He possessed an uncanny way of feeling my pain and with his unlimited amount of licks and kisses, he attempted to make me better and he did.

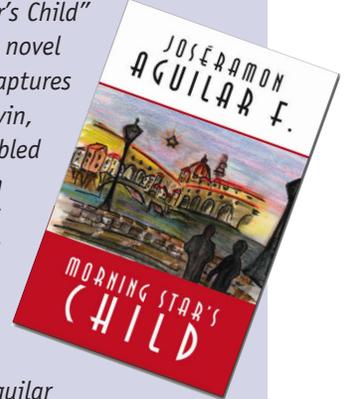
Dogs enrich our lives and become part of the family. When a dog takes you outside, he is trying to combat obesity, depression, stress, cholesterol and many other ailments that you might have. He understands that fresh air and exercise heals body and soul. For a person living with AIDS a dog is a blessing.

Max entered my life on my 40th



RECOMMENDED READING:

Joseramon Aguilar
"Morning Star's Child"
is a haunting novel that vividly captures the life of Kevin, a deeply troubled young man in search of self discovery and acceptance. In *"Morning Star's Child"*



Joseramon Aguilar captures an unusual cast of characters whose tangled lives play against the backdrop of Florence, San Francisco, and Puerto Vallarta. The writer weaves a brilliant fabric where deep relationships are built upon and cherished; combining romance, friendship and brotherhood. The book is about the painful spiritual journey forced on any gay man and his confusion of soul that comes from the church's rejection to his lifestyle. Kevin's pain is blunt, rich in description and resonates for lots of folks.

"Morning Star's Child" tells a story of great love and great tragedy. It has recaptured a dark moment in gay history. It is a story of a young man plagued by AIDS and his journey toward death and his remembering of a passion he felt for a young forgotten love deep within his memory.

birthday, eight years ago. He was with me when my relationship of over ten years ended, he was with me when a hernia attempted to rupture, he was with me when I had to pass kidney stones and the whole neighborhood heard my screams.

Max made me pay attention to the world outside, to be aware of

my surroundings, to take time and smell the roses. He gravitated me toward comfort and stability and for those reasons he was a tremendous contribution to my life.

Sadness and grief has invaded my heart and as I mourn my great loss, I remember my puppy that helped me through so many hard times. It was a delight and a blessing to live with Max whose frame of mind was always so positive, affectionate and bright. For eight years he improved my quality of life and I will miss him the rest of my life.

About the Author

Joseramon Aguilar received a degree in International Politics at Cal Poly University in San Luis Obispo and a Journalism degree at San Francisco State University. He moved to San Francisco to start a career in Journalism and eventually his interest turned to Creative Writing. His first novel "Mayatenango" is a political drama set in the turbulent years of civil war in Central America. Joseramon was born in Costa Rica and currently lives in Oakland, California.

Spotlight on Eric Capulla, MD

Eric Capulla, MD, is the newest member of the HIV Specialty Team. He is interviewed by Bonnie Gradstein, HIV Update Editor.

Bonnie: Tell me about your current position at Kaiser Permanente San Francisco?

Dr. Capulla: I have been at Kaiser since December 3, 2007. I am an attending physician on the HIV Module. I primarily do direct patient care, serving as an advisor, counselor and navigator helping patients as they go through their medical care. I advise them what to do to maximize their good health, but of course, it is up to them.

Bonnie: Where were you working prior to coming to SF and what kind of work did you do?

Dr. Capulla: Prior to coming to Kaiser, I worked for 12 years at the William F. Ryan Community Health Center in New York City, which served roughly 600 patients. At William Ryan, I was a primary care provider and the HIV Resource person to other physicians on staff. This came about because on our staff of 7 doctors, I was the most experienced in the field of HIV/AIDS. Prior to this position, I worked at St. Vincent's in Midtown as an attending physician on the prison unit.



Eric Capulla, MD

Bonnie: What do you like best about your work; what is most rewarding?

Dr. Capulla: The most rewarding part of my job is seeing my patients doing well. It is wonderful to have a part in helping people make significant and remarkable changes in their lives. I love the team approach at Kaiser, as we all work together to keep our patients healthy. This collaborative approach is unique and I feel privileged and happy to be a part of it.

Bonnie: What are your biggest challenges?

Dr. Capulla: The biggest challenge is to stay updated on all the new developments in medicine, as I constantly strive to stay current and to be a forward thinker.

Bonnie: As a physician, how do you see this as an opportunity to help patients work towards

healing their spirits following the diagnosis of HIV?

Dr. Capulla: As a navigator, I guide my patients to make the right decisions and to take an active part in managing their own health condition. I am a spiritual person myself and I believe in the holistic approach to treatment; that science, religion and psychology are all intertwined to help people in the healing process.

Bonnie: On the personal side... is there anything about yourself that you'd like to share?

Dr. Capulla: I consider myself to be an understanding and compassionate person. I believe in treating people the way I'd like to be treated. I love to play tennis, go to the movies, dine at the wonderful Bay Area restaurants and travel. Some of my favorite travel destinations are South America, Europe, Montreal and Brazil. I went to High School and college in the Bay Area and have always loved it. Now that I am back in San Francisco, and particularly at Kaiser, I truly feel like I've "come home."

I'm delighted to be here and hope that I will be with KP until I retire.

**Wisdom from Eric:
"Enjoy Life to the Fullest"**

HIV/AIDS Advisory Board News

The KPSF HIV/AIDS Advisory Board

by Steve Muchnick

The Kaiser Permanente San Francisco HIV/AIDS Advisory Board, which is 15+ years old, provides a way for members and providers to share information about the care provided to HIV+ members, discuss concerns and suggest solutions, and commemorate World AIDS Day. To be a member, you only need get your care at KPSF (you don't need to be HIV+) and be willing to take an active part. The Board has a clinical task force currently focused on prevention and early detection of HIV infection.

We currently have four dinner meetings a year in the Sapphire Room, floor 4-W at 2238 Geary Blvd. Guests are welcome.

The Board is now the only organization of its kind in the nationwide Kaiser system. There were others, but they have all disbanded as HIV care has become very high quality across all of Kaiser. When I joined in 2000, we had roughly the same numbers of provider and Health-Plan members, but in recent years, the number of Plan members has decreased. To be effective, we need

more Plan members.

Future columns will focus on recent Board and task force meetings, but space is so tight in this issue that I can only hope to whet your interest in joining us.

Email me at
smuchnick@sbcglobal.net
if you'd like to know about recent Board meetings or volunteer.

Kaiser Permanente Growing Healthy Communities

2007 HIV/AIDS Initiative

In 2007, Kaiser Permanente awarded grants totaling over \$1 million in Northern California to support HIV prevention services and services for people living with HIV/AIDS. The Kaiser Permanente San Francisco Medical Center Community Benefit program selected eight community-based organizations to receive grants totaling \$240,000. The chosen HIV/AIDS groups represented a diverse base of comprehensive services to an extensive population base.

The eight grantees are as follows:

- AIDS Emergency Fund (AEF)
- Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center
- Black Coalition on AIDS
- Instituto Familiar de la Raza
- Lavender Youth Recreation & Information Center (LYRIC)
- Lyon Martin Women's Health Services
- Positive Resources Center (PRC)
- Stop AIDS Project

In 2008, Kaiser Permanente's Community Benefit program will continue to disperse crucial funds to community-based organizations across the Northern California region and in the San Francisco Service Area. Kaiser Permanente's Community Benefit Plan is based on priority areas identified through community needs assessments conducted in every county in California. In 2008 the Community Benefit Plan will be updated based on the 2007-08 needs assessment.

Community Announcements

Join us!

Make a difference

THE HIV/AIDS ADVISORY BOARD NEEDS YOU.

The Kaiser Permanente San Francisco HIV/AIDS Advisory Board is seeking additional Health Plan members to serve as board members. You can help improve HIV care and prevention at KPSF, whether you are HIV-positive or not.

★ The next Advisory Board meeting is Monday, June 9 at 5:30 pm

★ For information about the board and its activities or to join, send an e-mail to Steve Muchnick at smuchnick@sbcglobal.net, or call Frank Sclafani at **(415) 833-8720**.



The Health Education Department is no longer conducting HIV Testing and Counseling on Thursday evenings. If a patient wishes to have HIV testing, they need to contact their Primary Care Provider and should set up an appointment to do so.

Positive Life: A Women's Group

Please join us!

Our Group's Goals are to learn to live with HIV in healthy ways

- To nurture our self-improvement skills
- To learn to better cope with everyday situations
- To learn to manage conflict within ourselves and with others

Drop In

LAST MONDAY OF THE MONTH
5:00 – 6:00 pm
Kaiser Permanente San Francisco
Medical Offices
2238 Geary Blvd. at Divisadero
Sapphire Room, Fourth Floor SW

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If you have questions, call
Karin Heller, LCSW
(415) 833-0077
Group Facilitator
Kaiser Permanente, San Francisco

Participate in a Research Project...



The RED Plus Study is a randomized trial of a counseling intervention which focuses on the thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs that HIV-positive men who have sex with men employ when they decide to have

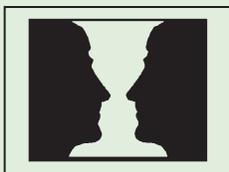
unprotected sex. We are recruiting HIV-positive men, 18 years old or older, who have had anal sex in the past six months. The participation commitment is three visits over the course of one year and participants are reimbursed for their time in cash at each visit. For more information, please call **(415) 502-8500**.

STAYING WELL Project

ARE YOU HIV+ AND NOT ON MEDS?



We are seeking participants for a UCSF study on the effects of meditation-based stress management and education groups on physical health and well-being. A study for those not on antiretroviral (HIV) medications, with CD4 t-cell count above 250 and viral load above 100. Compensation provided. Please call **(415) 353-9744** for more information.



The **Duo Project** is a study for gay men in couple relationships where at least one

person is taking HIV medication. Call the **Duo Project** toll free at **(877) DUO-6292** or **(877) 386-6292** today to take part in an interview and **earn cash!!!**

Visit an HIV-Focused Website

Comprehensive News, Views & Information about HIV AIDS

Check out the following:

www.POZ.com

Website in English & Spanish
Also available in print

POZ ASO Directory

for services and organizations in your area.

www.projinf.org

www.thebody.com

www.treathiv.com

There's no place like HOME!

DEPRESSED? Feeling down, sad or blue? The UCSF Health Outcomes for Mood Enhancement (HOME) study is designed to find out if treatment for clinical depression improves people's ability to take their HIV medications. We're looking for people who are 18 and older, are HIV+, living in San Francisco, and are able to participate in this 9 month-long study. Participants with depressive disorders are randomized into directly observed anti-depressant therapy or for referral to affiliated clinics. Compensation up to \$100 a month. To find out if you qualify, call us at **(800) 392-0292**.



Community Resources



Pride Parade & Celebration

We are beginning to plan for this year's Pride Parade and Celebration (June 27–29). This year's theme is *United by Pride, Bound for Equality*.

Don't forget!
AIDS Walk San Francisco
Sunday, July 20 in
Golden Gate Park

If you prefer to receive **HIV Update** via e-mail rather than snail mail, contact Bonnie at **bonnie.gradstein@kp.org** and let her know your e-mail address. You will be added to a confidential e-mail distribution list and receive your following issues online. **HIV Update** will also be available on **kp.org**. Call Bonnie if you have questions. **(415) 833-3452**.

Kaiser Permanente San Francisco HIV SERVICES

Appointments & Advice Dept. of Medicine and HIV Specialty Team

English	833-2200
Spanish	833-2203
Cantonese	833-2239

Benefits, Disability, Financial Assistance

Gabriel Lieuw	833-3475
Rebecca Dawson	

Complaints

	833-3725
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Chemical Dependency Recovery Program (CDRP)

	833-9400
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Dept. of Psychiatry Mental Health Services

	833-2292
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Health Education

Classes & Information	833-3450
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Clinical Health Educator

Fetah Nasrudin	833-4638
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HIV/AIDS Advisory Board

	833-8720
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HIV Program Coordinators

Ed Chitty, RN, ACRN	833-4258
Phooey Nguyen, Pharm.D	833-0162

HIV Support Groups

Frank Sclafani, MFT	833-8720
Karin Heller	833-0077

HIV Update Newsletter

	833-3452
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Nutritionist/HIV Specialty Team

Alyssa Wilson, RD	833-2894
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Pharmacist

Tony Phengrasamy, Pharm.D	833-8719
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Research

HIV Clinical Trials	833-3480
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HIV UPDATE

Kaiser Permanente San Francisco

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