



Dear Hotline,

I am confused. First they called this virus HTLVIII, then I heard GRID, LAV, ARV. Just when it seems we've settled for the acronyms AIDS and ARC, the next in-term appears to be HIV. And, in passing, what does all of this alphabet soup mean?

Sincerely,
Jean

Dear Jean,

Start with the basic premise that medical terminology tries to be explicit, and therefore when scientists name something, the name is a long, inclusive, usually unpronounceable word or series of words. Shortening it to an acronym (a word formed out of initial letters or parts of a series of words) makes it easier to use, especially for us non-medical types. Specific to HIV: French and American scientists simultaneously discovered the "AIDS virus" in 1984. The French called their discovery "Lymphadenopathy Associated Virus" or LAV; the Americans called theirs "Human T-Cell Lymphotropic Virus, type 3" or HTLVIII.

ARV (AIDS-associated Retro Virus) was an attempt to find a name they could agree on for the virus itself. GRID (Gay-related Immune Deficiency) was an early name for the disease which eventually became commonly known as AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome).

As we have learned more about the disease and the virus which causes it, the terminology has been refined to reflect that knowledge. When the disease which was initially lumped under the name AIDS was recognized to be a series of stages, ARC (AIDS-Related Condition) was the name given to the initial symptomatic stage.

Whew! We have now replaced everything I have just explained with the current terminology: HIV (Human Immuno-deficiency Virus) as the name of the virus itself. "HIV disease" is the term used for the full spectrum of the disease which manifests itself in four stages: Stage 1 is initial infection. Stage 2 is HIV-positive asymptomatic, Stage 3 is HIV-positive symptomatic (previously ARC) and Stage 4 is full blown AIDS. Most countries have adopted this terminology now. The media still uses "AIDS" generically, but you will be seeing "HIV disease" more and more often.

Dear Hotline,

All I ever hear is how awful the statistics are, that the rates of transmission are doubling faster than rabbits can multiply, that this is the plague of the modern age. Is there anything positive to look forward to in the future? What can we do in the trenches as time passes in the lab?

Very, very sincerely,
Larry

Dear Larry,

The following is excerpted from *PWAlive* and written by Keith Gann. It's the best answer we've heard so far to your question. Thanks for asking.

"The Viet Nam War was the backdrop for my entire adolescence. Though it was

thousands of miles away, there was not a day in which I was not touched by it, from the Gulf of Tonkin incident in fourth grade to my freshman year in college in England when Nancy Ackerson, a cherubic woman with long shining red hair, burst into my dormitory room and proclaimed, 'THE FUCKING WAR IS OVER!' We laughed and hugged and danced around that room.

"Only later that evening did I ask, 'What now?' There was a curious sense of loss, of being nowhere, of having all my reality of years changed in a moment. Despite all those years of working against the war, I'm not certain we ever really believed it would eventually be over! We were so caught in the urgency of the present that the future was more than we could get to.

"During the past five years AIDS has assumed that same pervasive role. It colors every day and is an everpresent conscious part of how I live my life. I talk about it with friends. I think about it over coffee. I write about it. When people ask, 'How are you?' I hear 'HOW ARE YOU?'

"What I notice is missing in all this are words and phrases like 'cure' and 'when this is over.' Somewhere, in the day-to-day living and the rhythmic repetition of the media

death message, words got lost.

"We need to find them and find them fast. We need to use them often and in as many ways and circumstances as we can. We make it so familiar and so much a part of our daily consciousness that it can't not happen! Don't let a support group meeting end without taking a moment to visualize what our lives will be like when this is over. When you are in the trenches fighting this epidemic, remember to turn to your comrade and ask, 'So, what are you going to do after the cure?'

"Not only will this epidemic end more quickly, but when your own personal Nancy Ackerson bursts into your room to proclaim 'FUCKING AIDS IS OVER!' you'll be prepared with an answer to 'Now what?'"

The Oregon AIDS Hotline is a joint project of the Oregon State Health Division and Cascade AIDS Project. The Hotline is open 7 days a week to answer your questions and provide referrals. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. and Saturday/Sunday, noon-6 p.m. Call 223-AIDS in Portland; 1-800-777-AIDS toll-free throughout Oregon and Southern Washington.



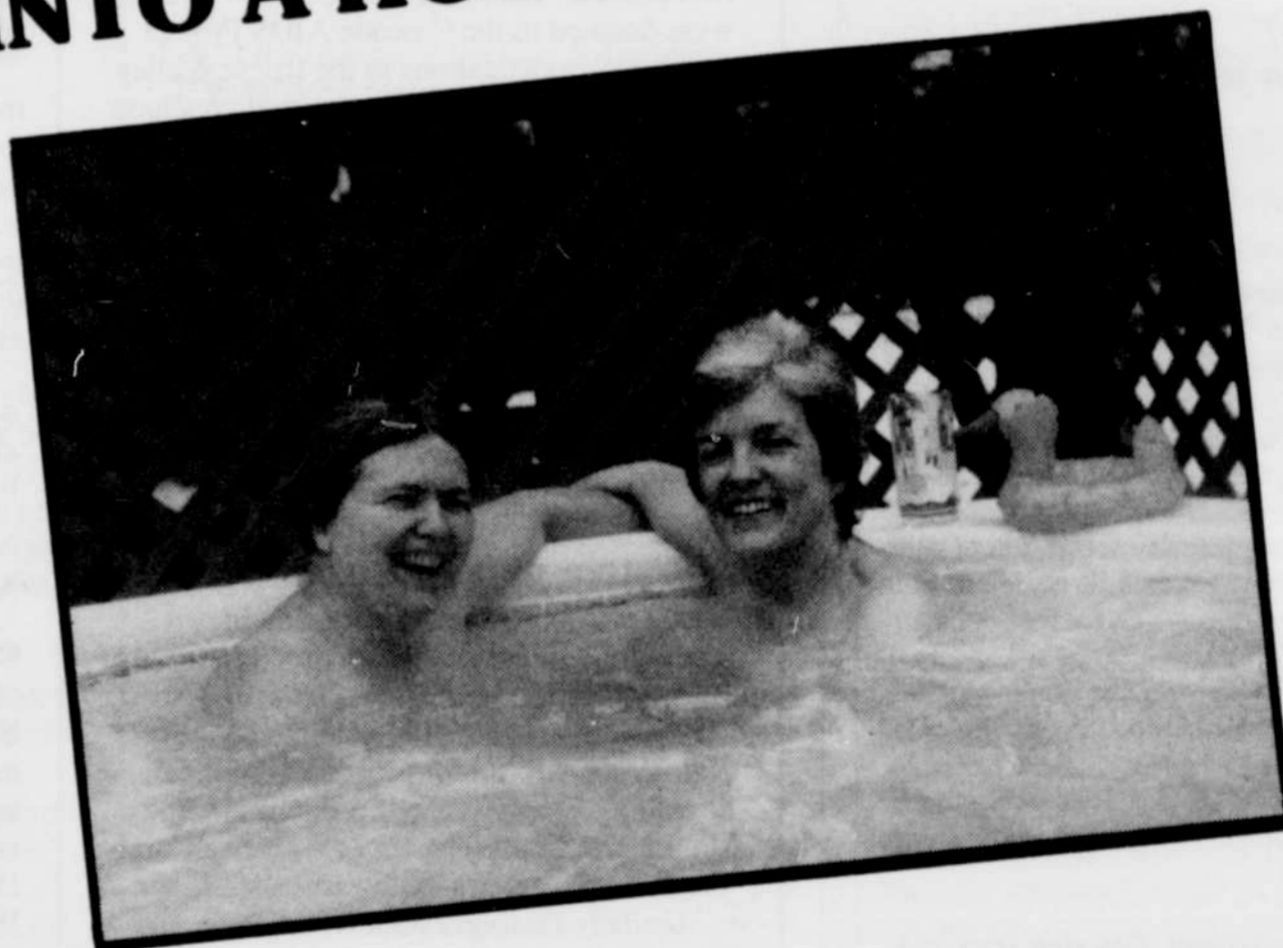
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