

Gay Health... Not An Easy Issue

By Craig Nelms

Health Care has become a major issue for gays and lesbians because of the aids crisis. There are many other topics in health care which should concern us, too. This column will deal with a variety of topics which impact gays and lesbians; I encourage you to send ideas and suggestions to Q-Notes, so that I can address matters of interest to readers.

For the next couple of issues, we will deal with the relationship between caregivers and patients. We have all experienced the difficulty of dealing with caregivers who are not sensitive to gay and lesbian concerns. The suggestions below may be helpful as you seek care and establish yourself with new treaters.

1) **Utilize MAP (333-AIDS)** and the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (525-6128) to locate caregivers who are known to be sensitive to gay and lesbian concerns.

2) **Be honest** with doctors and nurses. Be open about sexual issues, and also about other aspects of your life. For example, if your family is uncomfortable with your lifestyle and you expect this to be a problem during a hospital stay, warn your doctor and ask his cooperation in resolving the matter.

3) **Obtain a Durable Power of Attorney**, which will give your lover (or whomever you choose to appoint in the document) the power to act on your behalf if you are incapacitated. Place a copy in your medical records, and in the business office of any hospital you anticipate staying in. Keep the original in a safe place, but bring it with you if you may need to use it. This is an important document; it will empower your lover to take control if necessary. Your family can take over in such

situations without this document. Ask treaters if they will recognize the document, or if they will leave decisions to your family. If he will ignore the document, get another doctor. The time to tell the doctor that your lover, not your family, will maintain control is *before* you become incapacitated.

4) On any form you are asked to fill out, **list your lover** as "Next of Kin" or "Person to Call in Case of Emergency." Let decision makers know that you have done this. If a nurse or doctor ever tries to exclude your lover, a reminder of this paperwork will usually suffice.

5) **Let treaters know** that you will not be ridiculed, harassed, or embarrassed. You will not let homophobia on the part of caregivers make you uncomfortable. Doctors and nurses are usually willing to go out of their way to make you comfortable; you must let them know what behaviors make you uncomfortable. Remind them of the effects of stress on ill people, and let them know that their homophobic behavior is a source of stress for you.

6) **Never let it slide** when a member of your health team is insensitive. Be calm and reasonable, but deal with it.

7) **Develop rapport** with members of the health team, and then when problems arise, ask for their assistance. When a homophobic caregiver sees that other caregivers are comfortable with you, they will usually become more sensitive. They may choose to care for other patients, and let caregivers who are comfortable with you take over. Either way, you will avoid the stress of dealing with homophobia. When you are ill, you should not have to focus energy on homophobic behavior. Example: "I'm too ill to fight with Nurse Jones over whether or not my lover can stay in the room while I'm being treated. He is staying. Could I have a different nurse?"

8) **Invite questions** by caregivers, if

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FLAWLESS FALL

SUNDAY NOV. 1

Dena Jackson, Ashley Alexander

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 4

Brandy Alexander, Jamie Monroe



FRIDAY, NOV. 6

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TWO BIG SHOWS 11:00 & 1:00

with Vinnie Rosea, Big Bubba
and The Italian Stallion

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SHOW 11:00

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SCORPIO

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(704) 377-0993

Dear Friends:

I just wanted to take this opportunity to invite you to come in and visit in my new Grooming Shop I opened this past summer. It's located in the heart of Elizabeth at 1919 East Seventh Street, and I'm completely equipped to handle all of your pet grooming needs.

And, just in time for Christmas, I'm pleased to announce that nationally renowned Pet Photographer Ivan Schwartz will be at our grooming shop! On November 18th and 19th, from 8 am until 6 pm, Mr. Schwartz will be available to photograph your pet, and no appointment is necessary. For only \$19.95, you will receive **FOUR** 4"x6" Color Portraits and a free enclosure frame! Of course, additional prints will be available in a variety of sizes. In addition, my staff and I will be available all that week to provide grooming services for your pets at a **15% DISCOUNT** so that they will look their best when they "pose for the lights and cameras"! Just give me a call at 377-0993 to set up a grooming appointment, and just mention the "Pet Portrait Special"!

I hope you take advantage of this opportunity to create a memory and to give your loved ones a gift that will be unique for years to come!

Looking forward to seeing you soon!

Bucky Adams