

Ab Fab: Is the New Treatment For Belly Fat Right for You? • Hep C PI Heads Toward Approval

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Anniversary
20th
Issue

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NewsBreak

Ringling the Bell

On December 1, Douglas A. Michels, president and CEO of OraSure, alongside New York State Senator Tom Duane and Assemblyman Darryl C. Towns, rang the NASDAQ opening bell and kick-started another day at the stock exchange in Manhattan. The state legislators took the opportunity to officially honor the late Dennis deLeon, the founder and former executive director of the Latino Commission on AIDS. DeLeon had supported the recently passed New York State HIV testing law, which encourages routine HIV testing for all people ages thirteen to sixty-four. Throughout the day, Community Healthcare Network and Planned Parenthood of NYC offered free rapid HIV testing with OraQuick ADVANCE in testing vans in Times Square and Union Square. In addition, OraSure supported more than 150 events in more than twenty-five states in the U.S. and events abroad in the U.K., Kenya, Colombia, and South Korea.



When in Rome

Pope Benedict XVI expounded Catholic Church doctrine, which has long been criticized by some sexual-health advocates for supporting abstinence-only as an HIV/STI prevention method, and stated that the sin of wearing condoms does have a place in the fight against AIDS. Though the Vatican has no official policy on condom use, the pontiff has made remarks in the past that condoms exacerbated the spread of AIDS because they were not 100-percent effective and gave people a false sense of security.

Pope Benedict has not changed his mind nor Catholic doctrine, but has now clarified that using condoms, although considered a sin because the practice may result in contraception, is not as great a sin as not using condoms and putting individuals at risk for HIV infection. In other words, using a condom during sex reduces the "evil"—because it



shows consideration for the life of another—of the “immoral” activity of sex outside of heterosexual marriage. As an example, Pope Benedict expressed that male and female prostitutes who, by using condoms, could take “a first step in the direction of a moralization, a first assumption of responsibility.” Some officials in the AIDS field predicted that the revision would lead to fewer infections.

Digital Deaths

Alicia Keys’ Keep A Child Alive Foundation launched a social-media campaign that turned social media on its head. Called **Digital Death**, the campaign held for ransom the Twitter and Facebook presences of participating celebrities until \$1 million was raised. Lady Gaga, Justin Timberlake, Usher, Janelle Monáe, Jay Sean, Elijah Wood, Ryan Seacrest, Jennifer Hudson, Kim and Khloe Kardashian, Serena Williams, and Swizz Beatz (Keys’ husband) filmed “last tweet and testament” videos and appeared in ads that showed them lying in coffins. Their absence from these social-media platforms hoped to provoke the numerous fans who follow their activities via on-line platforms. For instance, Keys has more than 2.6 million followers on Twitter. Lady Gaga has more than 7.2 million of her “little monsters,” as she calls her fans, on Twitter, and nearly 24 million followers on Facebook.

Although the campaign knowingly played on the cult of celebrity, essentially asking why we care more about the single death of a famous person than the millions of people dying from HIV/AIDS, some critics wondered if the images of fake death were tasteless in this context.

Donations were accepted via text messages and Buy Life bar-code technology, which allows smart-phone users to scan designated bar codes and donate directly to Keep a Child Alive. Funds raised will support families affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa and India. The campaign so far has raised over \$1 million, with half coming from fans and half from philanthropist and pharmaceutical distributor owner Stewart Rahr. Even as celebrities are now “alive,” many users of these social-media platforms sacrificed—and continue to sacrifice—their digital lives and are awaiting more donations.

For more information, log on to www.keepachildalive.org and www.buylife.org.

