

## PRESS RELEASE

### **MOST WOMEN WITH HIV AND THEIR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS HAVE NOT DISCUSSED HOW HIV MIGHT AFFECT THEM DIFFERENTLY THAN MEN**

#### ***Survey Shows Nearly Three-quarters of Women Struggle in Managing their Daily Lives***

**ATLANTA, October 10, 2007** – New findings from the *Women Living Positive* survey show a communication gap between women living with HIV and their health care providers when it comes to having important discussions about HIV treatment options that meet their individual needs.

More than half of the women surveyed (55 percent) say they have never discussed with their health care provider how HIV medications might affect women differently than men. However, the survey also shows that, of the 45 percent who did have this discussion, a majority reported that their health care provider answered questions to their satisfaction and made them feel comfortable discussing the issue (96 percent and 95 percent, respectively).

There are now an estimated 300,000 women in the United States living with HIV/AIDS.<sup>1</sup> African-American and Hispanic women make up a combined 24 percent of the U.S. female population, yet their communities shouldered an estimated 79 percent of the burden of HIV/AIDS cases among women in 2005.<sup>2</sup> In addition, each year more than 6,000 HIV-positive women in the United States give birth.<sup>3</sup>

“With the rise of HIV infections in women,<sup>4</sup> it is important to understand their struggles and unique issues when evaluating their care and treatment options,” says Kathleen Squires, M.D., Director of Infectious Diseases and Environmental Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and Professor of Medicine at Jefferson Medical College.

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“Women living with HIV need to work with their health care provider to discuss important topics including their emotional well-being, family planning considerations and care that best meets their health history and lifestyle.”

The majority of women diagnosed with HIV in the United States are of childbearing age.<sup>5</sup> The survey shows many HIV-positive women and their health care providers aren't discussing how HIV treatment options might affect a pregnancy until after they conceive. Most women surveyed who are or have been pregnant (57 percent) did not discuss pregnancy and appropriate HIV treatments for pregnancy with their health care provider before becoming pregnant. In addition, a majority of HIV-positive women surveyed report that daily life is a struggle. Approximately three quarters (73 percent) of respondents indicated that living with HIV has caused them to struggle a “great deal” or “somewhat” in managing their daily lives, and 60 percent say living with HIV has made their daily chores and activities more difficult.

“The *Women Living Positive* survey concludes that there is a communication gap between women and their health care providers when discussing HIV treatment options appropriate for them,” says Dawn Averitt Bridge, founder and Chair of the Board of The Well Project, a non-profit organization for women affected by HIV, and an HIV-positive mother. “We hope the survey findings will encourage discussion between women and their health care providers about HIV medications that best meet their individual needs. The good news is the survey found that, when these types of conversations happened, the majority of women were satisfied and comfortable with the experience.”

### **Additional Survey Findings**

Nearly all HIV-positive women surveyed say long-term success with medications and the ability to live a normal life is “essential” or “very important” when deciding on HIV treatment options. Many women also report that HIV affects their ability to care for their families and many report experiencing symptoms commonly associated with depression. More than one-quarter of women surveyed (27 percent) have often experienced five or more symptoms commonly associated with depression (e.g., changes in sleep patterns, loss of energy, unexplained aches or pains, and feelings of sadness).

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More than half of respondents (52 percent) identify themselves as caregivers. Forty-three percent of women surveyed feel that living with HIV has made taking care of their families “much more,” or “somewhat more,” difficult.

A majority of women surveyed (59 percent) feel that their culture, ethnicity or language impacts the care they receive either “a little” (21 percent) or “a lot” (38 percent). Hispanic (70 percent) and African-American (61 percent) women are more likely than Caucasian (37 percent) women to feel that these factors impact their care.

The survey was supported by Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. and developed in collaboration with The Well Project, a non-profit organization for women affected by HIV.

For more information about the *Women Living Positive* survey, please visit [www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org). The site also provides comprehensive information about HIV and provides tools and resources for women living with the disease in English and in Spanish.

In addition to the issues discussed above, there are other important topics for HIV-positive women to discuss with their health care provider. These may include cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other chronic medical conditions.

### **Survey Methodology**

The *Women Living Positive* survey was conducted via phone by GfK Roper Public Affairs between December 21, 2006 and March 14, 2007. Interviews were conducted with a total of 700 U.S. women, aged 21 and over, diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and on HIV treatment for three or more years. The women interviewed were part of three ethnic/racial groups – African-American, Caucasian and Hispanic.

Interviews were conducted in both Spanish and English. Figures for race/ethnicity and region were weighted where necessary to align with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) demographics data for adult HIV-positive women in the United States. Differences between the survey subgroups were tested at a 95 percent confidence level.

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### **About The Well Project**

The Well Project is a non-profit organization dedicated to changing the course of the AIDS pandemic by bridging research, resources and relationships to help women with HIV and AIDS live positively. Conceived and developed by HIV positive women and those who care for them, The Well Project addresses three critical gaps in the HIV/AIDS arena for women: information access; treatment research; and community support. The Well Project provides easy-to-understand, current and multi-lingual information and educational resources through its Web portal ([www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)); accelerates research on women and HIV/AIDS through its dynamic research group, the Women's Research Initiative; and builds peer support networks via the National Positive Women's Training Initiative in communities most affected by HIV/AIDS.

### **About Boehringer Ingelheim**

Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., (Ridgefield, CT) is a research-driven company dedicated to researching, developing, manufacturing and marketing pharmaceuticals that improve health and quality of life. Boehringer Ingelheim is committed to the research and development of novel antiretroviral agents and to improving HIV therapy by providing physicians and patients with innovative antiretroviral drugs.

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## **References**

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