

VR76718
Patient Testimonial (audio script)
Elaine, Napa, California

Introduction:

Elaine grew up in Pebble Beach, California and now lives in Napa with her husband. She is currently writing a book about her experience living with HIV.

Elaine's Story:

Not long after I was diagnosed with HIV, a psychologist told me that I would find a gift in having HIV. I thought she was crazy, but now that I have been living with HIV, I understand what that psychologist meant. I've appeared in two documentaries, am writing a book and am speaking publicly in order to help educate people about HIV, erase the stigma and to teach the importance of HIV prevention.

I never thought that I would be diagnosed with HIV. I was born and raised in Pebble Beach, California and earned two degrees in college. It was two months before my wedding when I went to a new doctor in Napa. I had been having some health issues, but did not think I had any serious health problems. I was so focused on planning my wedding and the last thing I expected the doctor to tell me was that I had HIV, but that's the diagnosis I received.

One of the hardest things about being diagnosed with HIV was the fear. I was scared that I would die and I was scared because there was - and is - such a stigma associated with HIV. I even tried to convince my now-husband not to marry me because I thought my HIV diagnosis would ruin his life. He stood by me though and it's through his support, and that of my other friends and family, that I feel comfortable sharing my story. I have been able to get past the fear and now I even work to educate others to erase the stigma associated with HIV.

I was especially scared to start taking HIV medications to help me manage my disease. I spoke to my doctor about my health history, my ability to take my medications as prescribed and the benefits and risks of taking HIV medications, and we decided that VIRAMUNE in combination with other medications was the best option for me. It is important to ask your doctor about the benefits and risks of the therapy you are taking. My doctor also told me about the common and serious side effects of VIRAMUNE, which include rash and liver reactions.

[Voice Over: "VIRAMUNE can cause serious liver damage and skin reactions that can cause death. Any patient can experience such side effects, but some patients are more at risk than others. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information and see the important safety information provided below on this website."]

My VIRAMUNE based combination therapy and working with my doctor help me to manage my HIV disease - my regimen works for me. Everyone is different though and everyone's disease is different, so it's important that you talk to your doctor about your health, lifestyle and which HIV medications are best for you. You and your doctor will discuss the risks and benefits of antiretroviral medications before you start or switch your therapy.

VR76718

Patient Testimonial (audio script)

Elaine, Napa, California

My doctor told me how important it was to take all of my medications exactly as prescribed and to keep up with my medical appointments and care. When I talk with other people who are living with HIV, especially people just beginning treatment, I tell them that, for me, I think adherence to my treatment regimen has been key to maintaining my health. There are a lot of tools people can use to help them remember to take their medications like setting an alarm on your cell phone and pill boxes with alarms on them. It's important to take your medication and remember to take care of yourself so that you can manage your disease.

Living with HIV can be challenging, but I consider myself blessed. I have a great family and friends who are supportive of me. I've also gotten the opportunity to help other people by speaking to schools and other groups about living with HIV – and how to prevent it. Right now, I am also looking forward to publishing my first book and appearing in a documentary –things I never dreamed of doing before I had HIV.