IN THE 80S, MY MOM DID HIV/AIDS EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN PRISONS.

THE ONLY STORY SHE TOLD US OF THIS TIME IS THAT SOMEONE SHE WORKED WITH TOLD HER SHE WOULD LOOK "REALLY COOL" IF SHE SHAVED A LIGHTNING BOLT INTO HER HAIR.

THEY LOVED HER, SAYS KIDS.

SO SHE DID.

BUT SHE SAID ALL HER STORIES WERE TOO SAD AND SHE DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.

LATER I REMEMBERED THAT HIV/AIDS IN THE 80S WAS A DEATH SENTENCE.

MY DAD WORKS IN PEDIATRIC INFECTIOUS DISEASE. SOME OF HIS PATIENTS HAVE BEEN CHILDREN BORN WITH HIV.

IN THE 90S, HIV WAS MANAGEABLE COURTESY OF DRUG COCKTAILS AND A COUPLE WITH AN HIV- PARTNER AND AN HIV+ PARTNER COULD CREATE A LIFE TOGETHER (WITH APPROPRIATE PRECAUTIONS)

BUT THINGS WERE MORE COMPLICATED IF THEY WANTED TO START A FAMILY. THERE WAS NO WAY TO ENSURE THEIR BABY WOULD BE BORN HIV-...

AND A HIGH PROBABILITY THAT THEIR CHILD WOULD BE HIV+.

SCIENTISTS HAVEN'T YET FOUND A WAY TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE VIRUS FROM PERSON TO PERSON.
Fortunately for the newly-diagnosed and at-risk populations, research on HIV/AIDS has advanced new treatment options since the 80s and 90s. HIV is now a treatable chronic condition.

Where once HIV was a death sentence, now men and women with HIV are living long enough to experience old age (and all the complications that come with aging).

Researchers are watching closely and learning more and more as time goes on.

IN THE 2000S, Sesame Street in Nigeria and South Africa introduced a muppet character born with HIV to combat stigma towards those living with HIV.

Now young couples with an HIV+ partner and an HIV- partner can have children who are HIV- (with the proper precautions and some support from their physician).

My first lesson on the history of AIDS in the US came from the movie version of the Broadway play RENT, about New Yorkers living under the shadow of AIDS. Not highbrow, I know, but it was a very popular movie in the 2000s.

While we still have a lot to learn about HIV and more education on HIV/AIDS to provide to the general public, there is hope for the future.

I look forward to seeing where HIV/AIDS research goes in my lifetime.
New HIV/AIDS is treated like a chronic disease and most of the cases show a decrease in the number of HIV cases diagnosed every year.

The major exception is Florida, the state with the most new cases of HIV diagnosed every year in the US.

In a study the CDC did on "most unique cause of death," for each state, Florida is the only state with "HIV" as the most unique cause of death.

Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando & Miami are all in the top 25 cities for new HIV cases in the US.

Miami alone has more new cases in a year than the state with the second highest rate of HIV infection.

As education and awareness of HIV/AIDS increases across the United States and newly diagnosed cases decrease, Florida experiences an ongoing epidemic of new HIV cases. We must educate ourselves and know our testing status through regular testing.

Relevant information resources:
- www.aids.gov
- aidsinfo.nih.gov
- aids.nim.nih.gov
- www.cdc.gov/hiv