

Tom Siara / Bears of Poland Association

**Changing the paradigm  
of biomedical prevention:**

**U=U in Poland**

**HIV UNDETECTABLE=UNTRANSMITTABLE**

**UNDETECTABLES**

**U=U POLAND: HIV SOCIAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

**‘It’s gonna be a very POSITIVE campaign.’**



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# Tom Siara

Designer (Communication/Branding)

LGBTQ+ Activist

HIV/AIDS Activist

President of Bears of Poland Association

Initiator of U=U Poland campaign.





# Facing inner HIV stigma

while supporting others  
affected by HIV.

A social-first approach to reduce  
HIV stigma among communities  
affected by HIV.

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The year is 2002.  
Upon receiving the results of my  
anonymous HIV test, I was told:

**You are HIV+.**

**You have 6 months to**

**live.** We are unable to help

**I'm** sorry. Good bye...



—

**With just a few words  
of a drunken  
physician**  
**I was buried alive.**





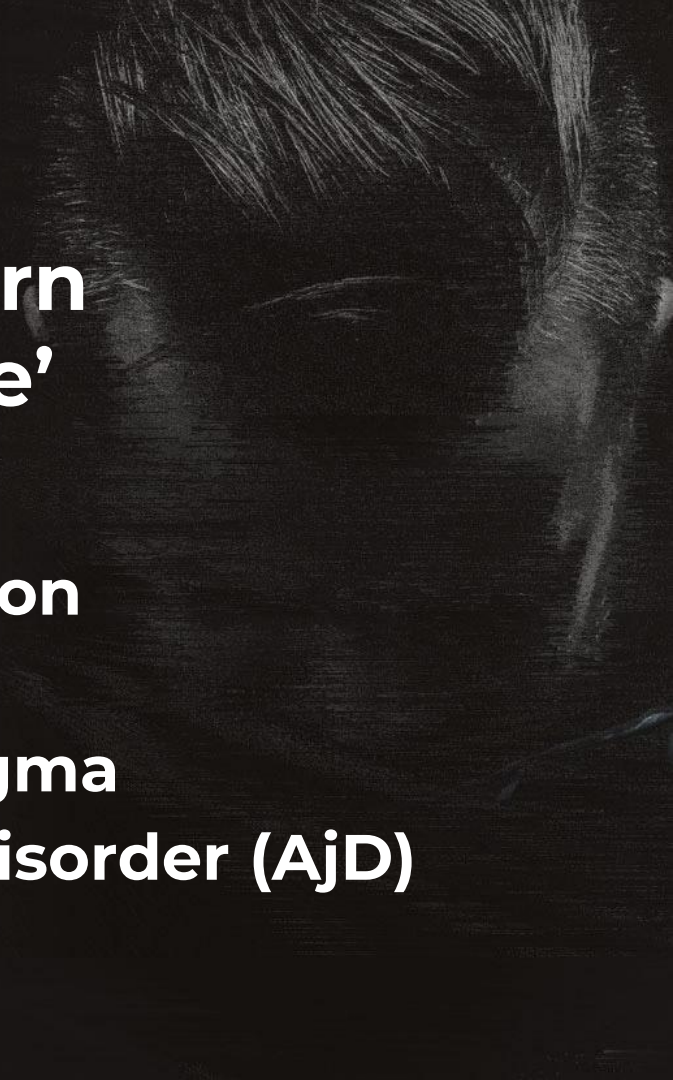


That 'diagnosis'  
broke me for years

—

**It took 17 years to return  
to a 'semi-normal state'  
as I am now**

**10 years of emotional isolation  
years of workaholism  
internalized HIV-related stigma  
undiagnosed Adjustment Disorder (AjD)**





—

**On a brighter side...**  
**I was extremely lucky**  
**to have full support**  
**family members**  
**a few close friends,**  
**that I opened up to.**



A portrait of a middle-aged man with a grey beard and mustache, wearing a green and white checkered button-down shirt. He is gesturing with both hands open, palms facing up. The background is a plain, light grey. On the left side of the image, there are two horizontal lime green bars. The text 'My archangel' is positioned to the right of the man.


# My archangel

**Jacek Gąsiorowski Ph.D.**

physician, infectious disease  
& internal medicine specialist,  
addiction therapy specialist,  
certified HIV/AIDS adviser

Stowarzyszenie Podwale 7  
/ WCZ SPZOZ / UMED



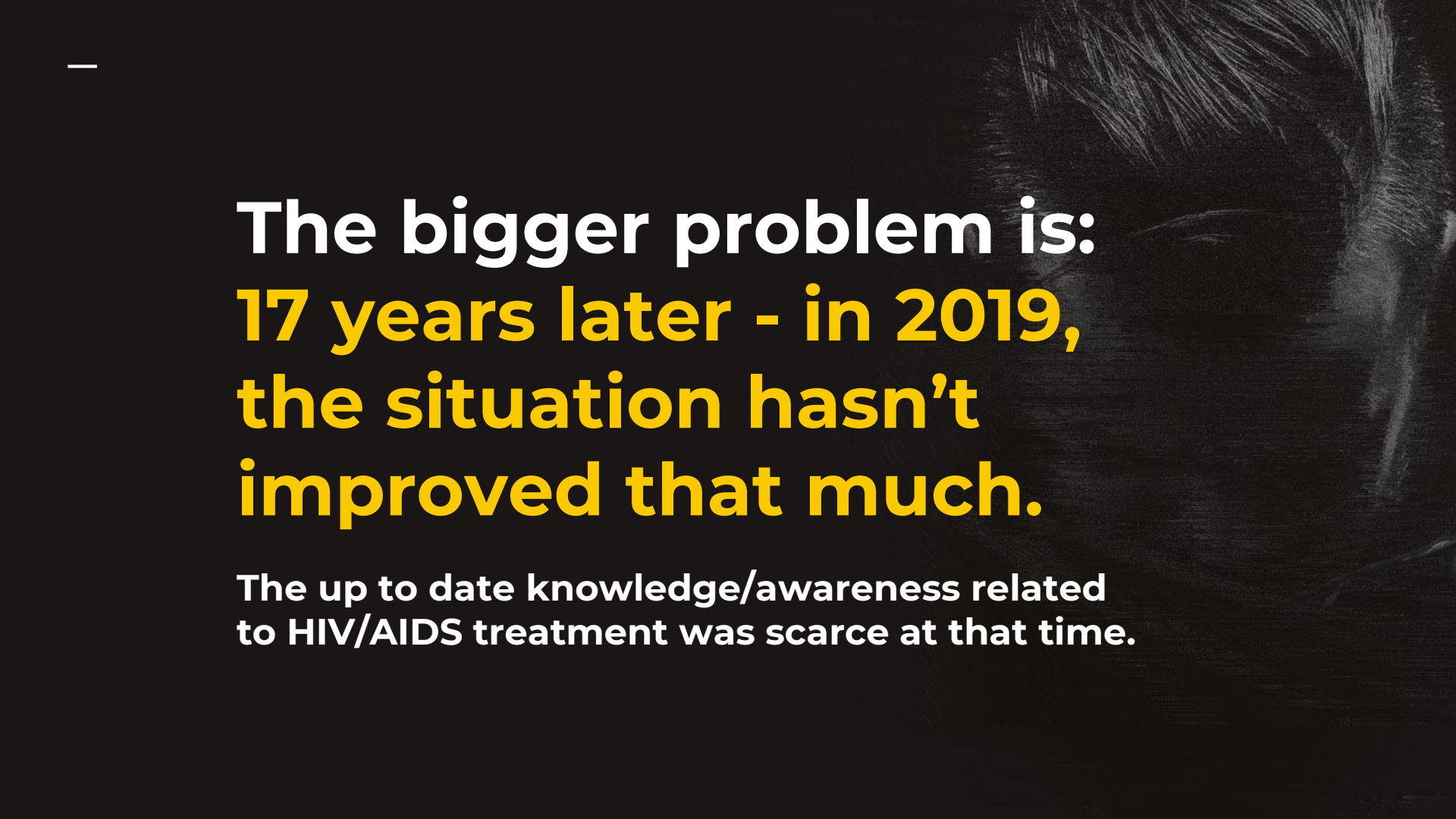
A portrait of Adam Mikuszewski, a man with a full beard and mustache, smiling and gesturing with his hands. He is wearing a dark blue t-shirt under a black button-down shirt. The background is a plain, light grey. On the left side of the image, there are two horizontal lime green bars. The text is positioned on the right side of the image.

**Me: but, I am HIV+...**  
**Adam: So what?**

**Adam Mikuszewski**

LGBTQ+/HIV Activist ✖ VIII Mr Bear Poland  
Bears of Poland Association





**The bigger problem is:  
17 years later - in 2019,  
the situation hasn't  
improved that much.**

**The up to date knowledge/awareness related  
to HIV/AIDS treatment was scarce at that time.**



—

**People still think that  
'the problem of HIV'  
doesn't concern them.**

—

**People still think that**  
**You can get HIV**  
**through a kiss...**





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**As a society**

**We still lack basic  
up-to-date knowledge  
on HIV/AIDS and on medical  
achievements related to it.  
Even medical specialists.**

---

**The result:**

**HIV stigma is still alive.**

**The number of new HIV  
infections in Poland  
keeps rising.**



—

**If it wasn't for HIV stigma.**  
**I could have returned**  
**to living a normal life**  
**within a year...**





A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a man's face. He has a full, dark beard and mustache. His eyes are looking directly at the camera with a serious, intense expression. He has two horizontal stripes of bright green paint or makeup on his right cheek. The background is dark and out of focus, showing the back of his head and shoulders. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of his beard and the intensity of his gaze.

—

**Despite befriending  
with my HIV status  
I am still affected by  
internal HIV stigma.**

Along with my anxiety disorders  
they still impact both my personal  
and professional life.

—

**But it's OK.**  
**At least NOW I**  
**KNOW** what is going  
on  
with me.

Without proper knowledge the vast majority of people affected with HIV may never get to this point.



**I don't want to let anyone**  
to experience what I've  
been through when U=U  
works...





**I am not a medical  
expert.**

**I am a designer.**

**A problem solver.**  
I solve design problems related to effective  
communication and creating brands every day.

---

Thanks to Adam, my long term  
HIV- partner I can stand in front  
of you.

**Giving my living  
testimony regarding  
the results of PARTNER  
studies.**



A photograph of two men with beards standing back-to-back with their arms crossed. The man on the left has a full, dark beard and is looking upwards and to the left. The man on the right has a shorter, well-groomed beard and is looking towards the right. They are both wearing dark-colored shirts. The background is a plain, light gray.

Together with Adam,  
my long term HIV- partner,  
**We are living proofs  
that U=U works.**



# The Face of AIDS

a photo by  
Therese Frare



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**“David Kirby was a great help  
to make understanding  
what AIDS was about.**

**”**

Oliviero Toscani / Benetton



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**I wanted to show on our example  
That it's possible to live a 'normal'  
fulfilling life as an undetectable  
HIV+ person.**

**The goal was also to return the positive  
meaning of the expression '(HIV) POSITIVE'.**



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# The Road to U=U Poland.

A 3-year journey from an idea  
to a nationwide coming out  
as a HIV+ gay male in Poland.

HIV UNDETECTABLE = UNTRANSMITTABLE

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U=U POLAND: HIV SOCIAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

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# **Mental preparation**

**2 years spent on 'growing into' the idea of coming out as an HIV+ gay male nationwide in Poland.**

**Nearing the premiere I realized that I stepped on a path of no return.**



# **Milestones (fail-safes)**

**10/18 Winning the title of Mr Bear Poland 2019**

**12/18 Coming out within my Bears community**

**02/19 Coming out to polish LGBTQ+ community**

**04/19 Coming out nationwide in Poland**

# **Team building**

**That whole campaign would not happen without the support of many amazing people that I am extremely lucky to have in my life.**

IT'S GONNA  
BE A VERY  
**POSITIVE**  
CAMPAIGN!

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**Partner  
in crime**

lek. Wiktor Łukasik





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## My archangel

**Jacek Gąsiorowski Ph.D.**

physician, infectious disease  
& internal medicine specialist,  
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Stowarzyszenie Podwale 7  
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**The Hand** (to Jacek)

**Bartosz Szetela Ph.D.**

physician, infectious disease specialist,  
addiction therapy specialist,  
certified HIV/AIDS adviser

Stowarzyszenie Podwale 7  
/ W CZ SP ZOZ / U MED



—

**‘Make it happen’ Guy**





A close-up portrait of a man with a well-groomed beard and mustache, smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a black t-shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

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# U=U Poland: The launch.

POSITIVE reception.

KAMPANIA SPOŁECZNO-EDUKACYJNA HIV/AIDS

**NIEWYKRYWALNY  
NIEZAKAŻAJĄCY**

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18:50 21 KWIETNIA  
NIEDZIELA



WYDARZENIA

KAMPANIA SPOŁECZNO/EDUKACYJNA HIV/AIDS

**NIEWYKRYWALNY  
NIEZAKAŻAJĄCY**

Życie jest POZYTYWNE.  
Twój status HIV tego nie zmienia.



07:15

13 MAJA  
PONIEDZIAŁEK

SIARA: BYCIE NIEWYKRYWALNYM OZNACZA, ŻE NA SKUTKACH  
MOŻLIWOŚCI, ŻEBY WIRUS HIV PRZEDOSTAŁ SIĘ DO CIAŁA



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**POSITIVE** reception.  
From media and  
communities.  
TV+Press Appearances.



—

**POSITIVE pieces.**  
**POSITIVE Stories**  
**POSITIVE Talks**  
**POSITIVE Meetups**

WORKSHOP ON  
SAFER SEX:

# ALL ABOUT THAT HOLE



**WFW** WARSAW  
FETISH  
WEEKEND

HOSTED BY:  
MICHAŁ PAWLĘGA  
& TOM SIARA

  
**ALPHA INDUSTRIES**  
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE, U.S.A.



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# U=U Poland: POSITIVE Results.

Success stories of people  
getting out of internal stigma  
within 4 months.

KAMPANIA SPOŁECZNO-EDUKACYJNA HIV/AIDS

**NIEWYKRYWALNY  
NIEZAKAŻAJĄCY**

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Getting through the things  
that I've been to allowed me  
to **find almost instant  
connection with people living  
with HIV.**



A portrait of a man with a full, dark beard and mustache, smiling slightly. He has short, dark hair and is wearing a black t-shirt. The background is a plain, light grey.

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# U=U Poland: The future.

4 months of combined  
efforts and media interest

KAMPANIA SPOŁECZNO-EDUKACYJNA HIV/AIDS

**NIEWYKRYWALNY  
NIEZAKAŻAJĄCY**

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# The PositHIVes: Getting international ready.

KAMPANIA SPOŁECZNO-EDUKACYJNA HIV/AIDS

**NIEWYKRYWALNY  
NIEZAKAŻAJĄCY**

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**The PositHIVes vision.**  
**A communication**  
**platform for HIV activists**  
**and physicians.**

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**Time for excuses is  
over.**

**Let's talk.**