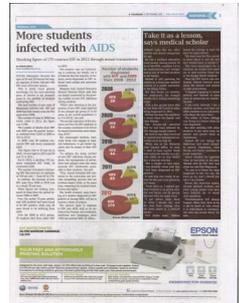


Headline	Take it as a lesson, says medical scholar		
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Take it as a lesson, says medical scholar

AHMAD looks like any other healthy and decent young man his age.

He has a brilliant education track record, having scored 10 As in his SPM, a perfect 4.0 in his matriculation and recognised as one of the best students in his faculty.

Ahmad is still pursuing his studies as a final-year medical student in a public university in the Klang Valley.

His face shows no emotion but underneath the tranquil facade, he is hiding something tragic.

Only a few people know that he has been HIV positive since being diagnosed in 2011.

'Ahmad has kept his condition a secret from his family and close friends.

The 24-year-old admitted that he had been infected by HIV through sexual contact.

He said he has been involved in unprotected homosexual activities since he was 16.

When met at the Malaysia Aids Council office, he said: "I used to have regular blood tests every six months at a private clinic, so on that fateful day, I was not worried.

"But a couple of days later, I was shocked when told that I had been diagnosed as HIV positive."

It took him two weeks to accept his fate and start planning his future.

"From then on, I started getting involved in an active website and forum run by people infected with the same virus."

"I got advice from them on what I should do," said the man from Kajang, who has been raised in a well-off family.

Two weeks later, Ahmad

found the courage to meet his dean for more advice.

"My dean was the first person to know about it, and she told me I should learn to accept it."

"She even encouraged me to continue my studies and urged me to take another blood test at the Sungai Buloh hospital."

Once his HIV status was confirmed, Ahmad learned more about his disease and started to take precautions.

"I stopped engaging in sexual activity and learned of more ways of preserving my health," he said.

"I am lucky because I am a medical student, and there are other students in my university who share the same fate."

The eldest of three siblings was living in a hostel when he was diagnosed.

But after meeting with other students in the same boat, he moved and joined them as roommates.

Ahmad did not change his behaviour and acted normally among classmates, close friends and family members to avoid suspicion.

Asked whether he regretted what he had done in the past, Ahmad said he felt that way when he was first diagnosed.

"No one is to blame for what happened to me. For me, life must go on, and I should just take it as a lesson."

Before the interview ended, Ahmad advised students and other young people who have been infected not to reveal their condition.

"Discrimination will always happen. What they have to do is get in touch or only reveal it to individuals or communities who can accept them," he said.