


the point

Journal of
Body Piercing

Issue 89
Spring, 2020

In this Issue
Creating Community in Uncertain Times


The Association of Professional Piercers



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The Quarterly Journal of the Association of Professional Piercers

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Photo by Autumn Swisher

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Contributions to *The Point* are always appreciated.

The Association of Professional Piercers is a California-based, international non-profit organization dedicated to the dissemination of vital health and safety information about body piercing to piercers, health care professionals, legislators, and the general public.

Material submitted for publication is subject to editing. Submissions should be sent via email to editor@safepiercing.org.

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IN THIS ISSUE

4

FROM THE EDITOR

7

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

8

APP SUGGESTED POST-COVID RESPONSE PROTOCOL

9

APP EXPANDED EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

10

COVID & APP EVENTS

12

COVID & THE BODY ART INDUSTRY

23

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE STUDIO ENVIRONMENT

24

FACEMASK BEST PRACTICES

25

HOW TO HAND WASH

26

THE GAY EAR

29

FROM THE BODY PIERCING ARCHIVE, 2019

32

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE

33

POC SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

34

CAMP APP REVIEW

40

UKAPP REVIEW

42

GRUPO DE ESTUDOS DE PIERCING (GEP)

44

GENTIAN VIOLET CONCERNS & ALTERNATIVES



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FROM THE EDITOR

MARINA PECORINO

Managing Editor—*The Point*



Marina Pecorino and Jim Ward honor their years of collaboration at the 2019 APP Conference & Exposition. Photo by Autumn Swisher.

The Point started in 1994 as a black and white paper mailer with a rotating cast of producers. The very *first iteration*¹ stated in its introduction that “we intend [for this publication] to serve as a forum for information; all contributions are welcome.” In *Issue 2*², *The Point* producers stated that the publication was intended to “make piercing a safe, positive, evolving craft” and cautioned submitting authors to “expect to be variously disagreed with, challenged, or supported by other subscribers. That’s exactly *The Point*.”

This will be my final issue as a Managing Editor of *The Point: Journal of Body Piercing*, and the last consolidated issue to be published in a

“printable” magazine format. Over the last five years I’ve helped to produce and publish 20 issues containing various tidbits of industry history; I’m sincerely proud of this professional and personal accomplishment. This unexpected opportunity allowed me to know colleagues and our organization in ways I wouldn’t have otherwise experienced. I feel closer and more connected to the piercing community, thanks to the knowledge I have gained as an Editor for this amazing publication. I am eternally grateful to have had this chance, and to have worked so closely with Kendra Jane B. and Jim Ward during my time with this project.

¹“*The Point*—official newsletter of the APP,” File Archive, Association of Professional Piercers, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.safepiercing.org/docs/point01.pdf>.

²“*The Point*—official newsletter of the APP: Volume 1, Issue 2,” File Archive, Association of Professional Piercers, published January 1995, <https://www.safepiercing.org/docs/point02.pdf>.

Moving forward, the publication will be exclusively available at thepointjournal.org in a blog style. We continue to encourage and welcome submissions of body modification and piercing related writing and high resolution images to editor@safepiercing.org. Since inception, this publication seeks to provide a reliable and progressive source of industry information, and a public platform for the diverse set of voices in our field.

The overall theme of this issue was originally planned around the interconnection between LGBTQIA+ and body mod culture; I had untold enthusiasm and personal connection to this theme. Unfortunately, due to a lack of author submissions from our community on the topic, and my own mental hurdles about ending this project (I'm not a fan of endings), the publication date was pushed far beyond our normal quarterly schedule.

Ultimately, I made the difficult decision to refocus the enclosed content around the current state of our industries and communities. Alongside many others, recently my attention and energy have been redirected; concentrating on how we can work together to create a community and support others in these uncertain

and ever-evolving circumstances. I am proud of the work that my colleagues and organization have accomplished in the face of this crisis; more information about these labors of love can be found on subsequent pages of this issue.

Unfortunately, like many others, I have very different feelings toward the collaboration, guidance, and assistance offered by my state and national governing bodies. This issue offers a selection of perspectives from different industry professionals on the current COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this difficult experience, I have been feeling much like Leah Sarah Kent describes later in this issue; "defeated, sad, and ultimately helpless" about the "systemic oppression and inequalities this virus so clearly exposes" and the lack of "major collective action as a people to rise up and fight for a new society."

Personally, I am ready for a social and structural revolution, with the safety, security, and well-being of the nation and world as the cornerstone. Until then, I'll continue doing what I can to use my platforms to share diverse perspectives, reliable information, and available resources with my local and global communities. I hope that you will do the same. As Caitlin McDiarmid has said: "Stay Positive. Stay Generous. Stay Safe."

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE PERFECT, JUST INSURED

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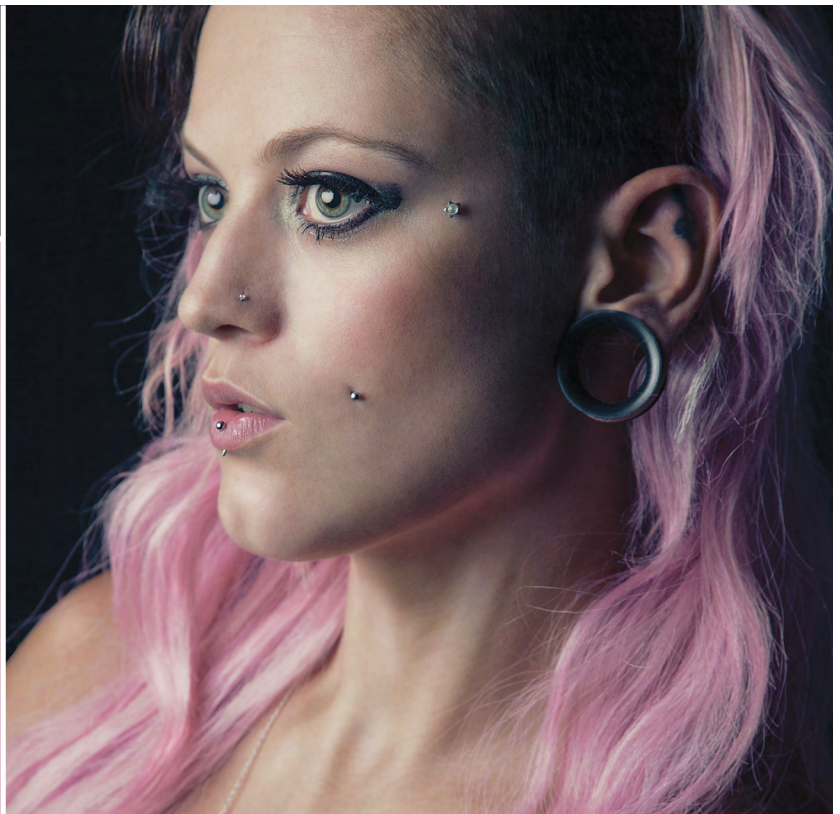
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*“Essential reading...”**

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

An Intimate History of the Modern Body Piercing Movement by Jim Ward

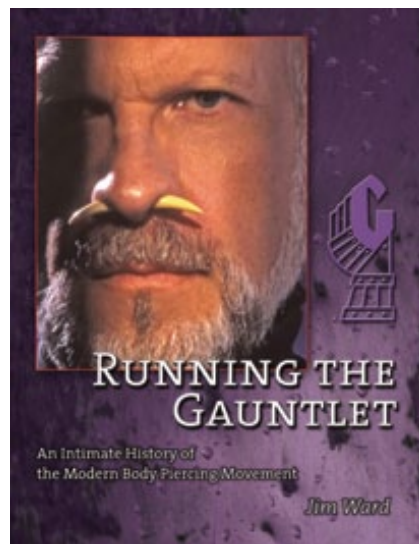
In this revealing autobiography, Jim Ward, considered by many to be the father of the modern piercing industry, tells the engaging and candid story of discovering his own fascination with body piercing, his founding of Gauntlet, the world's first body piercing studio, and how he transformed a personal fetish and backroom, amateur pursuit into a respected profession and spearheaded a world-wide social phenomenon.

Essential reading for everyone with an interest in body piercing; you, your shop staff, and your customers will treasure this book.

For more information and to order a copy of *Running the Gauntlet* signed especially for you by the author, visit runningthegauntlet-book.com. Also available wholesale and retail at safepiercing.org/publications/running-the-gauntlet.

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“Essential reading for anyone who wants to understand how modern body piercing arrived at the place it currently occupies.”

JAMES WEBER, *Former President*
Association of Professional Piercers

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

CODY VAUGHN

A lot has changed since I initially wrote this article. Originally I had written about how excited we should all be for our upcoming Conference, and how 2020 was going to be a great year for our piercing community. Little did I know...

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a massive impact on everybody, and our piercing community is no exception. I understand and sympathize that we are all facing incredible challenges, and the closure of our businesses has been a massive blow to us all.

The Board immediately began working on appropriate responses to the pandemic and how it affects our community. We issued our statement early in March recommending we all discontinue piercing services due to the high risk it could present to our staff and clients, prior to most states issuing mandatory closures. It was a necessary recommendation, but the economic impact of closures did make it a tough pill to swallow. Each response we have issued regarding COVID-19 has required multiple updates because of how quickly information has been changing, on a near daily basis.

A big question from our community has been whether or not our Conference would still happen this year.

The health and safety of our conference attendees, volunteers, speakers and vendors has been our top priority while looking at Conference. The Board put in a lot of work creating protocols and plans for how a scaled back Conference could look given the current situation, and every avenue was investigated as to how we

could safely make it happen. Initially there were no Federal guidelines for us to follow and everybody was in a bit of a holding pattern. Information continues to become available about COVID-19; the White House and CDC have begun making suggestions for each state outlining phases to determine when businesses can safely start to reopen. These developments made it clear to the Board that with the current state of affairs our 2020 Conference should not happen.

Prematurely canceling our Conference wasn't a simple option. Contract negotiations are a sensitive and complicated process and the fiscal impact we could have created by prematurely canceling would have been a heavy financial burden for our organization; a \$200,000+ penalty in addition to losing our biggest source of annual revenue.

On a national level, nobody knew how long these forced closure measures would last. A couple of weeks? A month? Our host hotel was initially only willing to discuss options when we were thirty days out from our Conference. But thanks to our Board Members' decisiveness, and a lot of scheduled meetings, we successfully came to a favorable negotiation earlier than that with our host hotel, which allowed us to cancel our 2020 Conference AND avoid penalties.

We thank you all for your patience and trust while we've worked on this. From the outside I can understand how people would think, "You should just cancel it," and my goodness how we all had hoped it could have been that quick and simple! As Board Members we have a responsi-



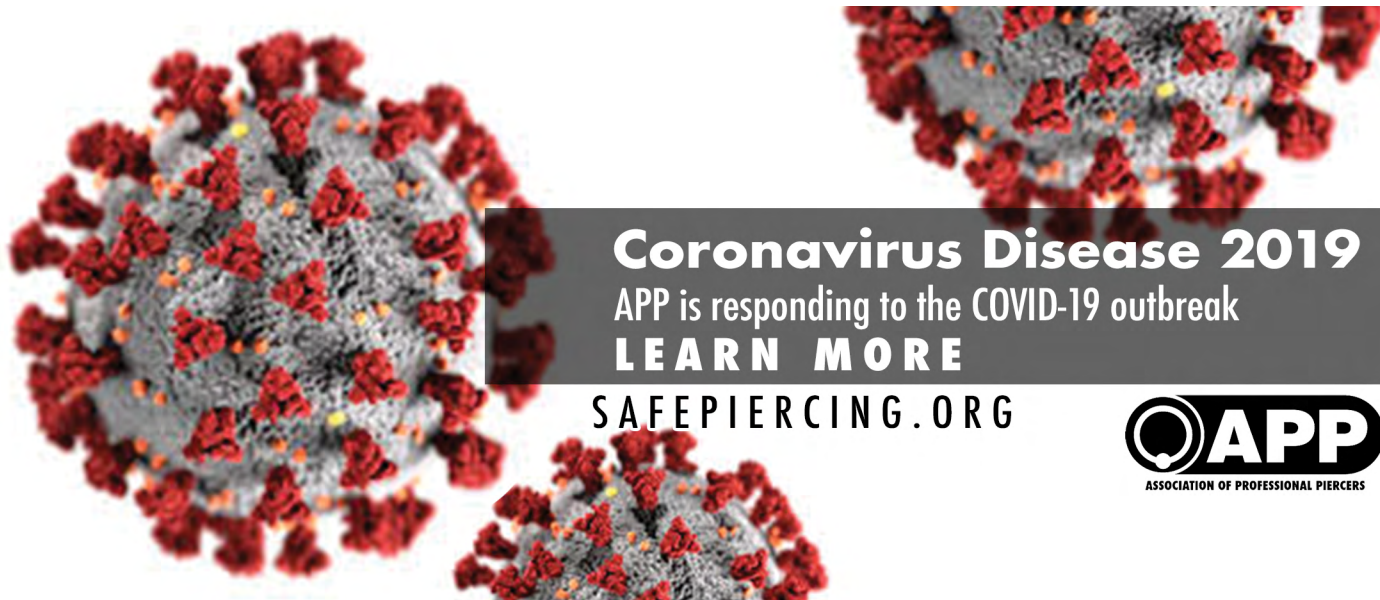
bility to be stewards of the organization, and to look out for its well being. That includes upholding our mission statement of health and safety, and looking out for the financial health of the organization.

I am incredibly proud of all of the tireless work our Board Members, Officers, APP staff and volunteers have been putting in to best address all these issues. Like everybody else, we all have our own family, financial responsibilities, and work/studios to worry about. Even with all that, everybody has truly risen to this challenge and continues to do so.

It isn't to say we are anywhere close to being out of the woods yet, as there is still a lot of work to be done and planning ahead. How this pandemic will affect our community long-term is not yet known. But I know the APP's Board, employees, and volunteers will all continue to do the absolute best job we possibly can.

I implore all of us in the piercing community to be kind and encouraging to each other in these difficult days ahead. We are a large extended family and now is the time for us to come together and show our support for one another.

I hope all of you reading this stay healthy, stay safe, and hang in there. It will be especially sweet when we are all able to safely meet each other again, and come together with our shared passion for safe piercing.



Coronavirus Disease 2019

APP is responding to the COVID-19 outbreak

LEARN MORE

SAFEPIERCING.ORG



APP RECOMMENDED RESPONSE & RECOVERY POST-COVID

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Updated April 25, 2020

The Association of Professional Piercers (APP) is an international health and safety organization. It is a nonprofit voluntary alliance dedicated to the dissemination of information about body piercing. Governed by a voluntary elected Board of Directors, the APP is a united group of piercing professionals that freely shares information to help fellow members, piercers, healthcare professionals, legislators, health inspectors, and the general public get the best and most up-to-date information about body piercing.

For most countries around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced the closure of body art facilities (including body piercing, tattooing, and other elective body art procedures). As countries seek to reopen their economies and ease measures like forced business closings and social distancing, the APP has sought to give accurate, appropriate, and achievable guidelines for all body artists to follow to decrease the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact in their

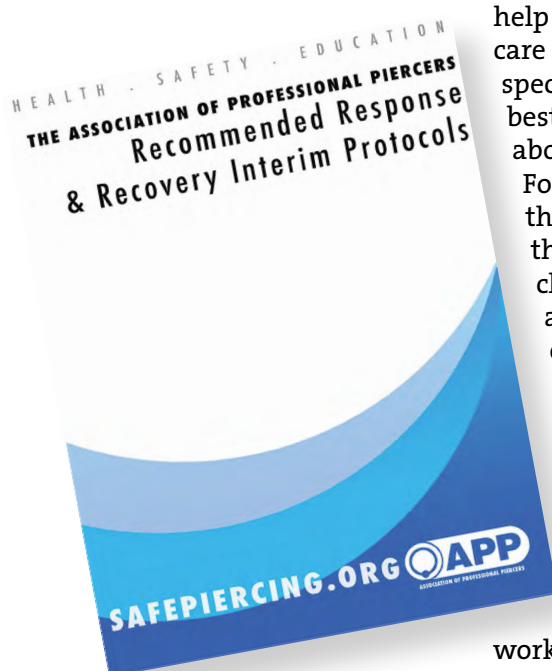
workplace. [Recommended Response & Recovery Interim Protocols](https://www.safepiercing.org/docs/APP_Recommended_Post-COVID19_Closure_Reopening_interim_protocols.pdf)¹.

We continue to recommend that body art professionals follow local, state or provincial, and national guidelines regarding the closure of non-essential business operations and, within these guidelines, make decisions that are best for them and their individual situations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a terrible impact on all body art businesses and the people who work in them. It has sickened and killed hundreds of thousands worldwide. Through it all, body artists have stuck together, freely shared information, and readied themselves to return to work and serve their clientele. The Association of Professional Piercers would like to thank the body piercing and body art community for their resiliency, professionalism, and commitment to health and safety.

During this pandemic, information continues to evolve very quickly. The authors of this document will make every effort to make regular updates as new and better information becomes available. If you have suggestions for improvements to this document please email the secretary of the APP at secretary@safepiercing.org.

In Health,
Your Board of Directors



¹Recommended Response & Recovery Interim Protocols," Public Service Announcements: COVID-19, Association of Professional Piercers, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.safepiercing.org/docs/APP_Recommended_Post-COVID19_Closure_Reopening_interim_protocols.pdf.

APP EXPANDED EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



An addition to the written [*Recommended Response & Recovery Interim Protocols*](#)¹, the Association of Professional Piercers has broadened its library of free resources available to body art practitioners, health inspectors, legislators, and the general public on the topic of body piercing.



A recording of the [*Reopening: What's That Going To Look Like?*](#)² webinar with Monica Sabin, Jef Saunders, and John Johnson is available on YouTube.



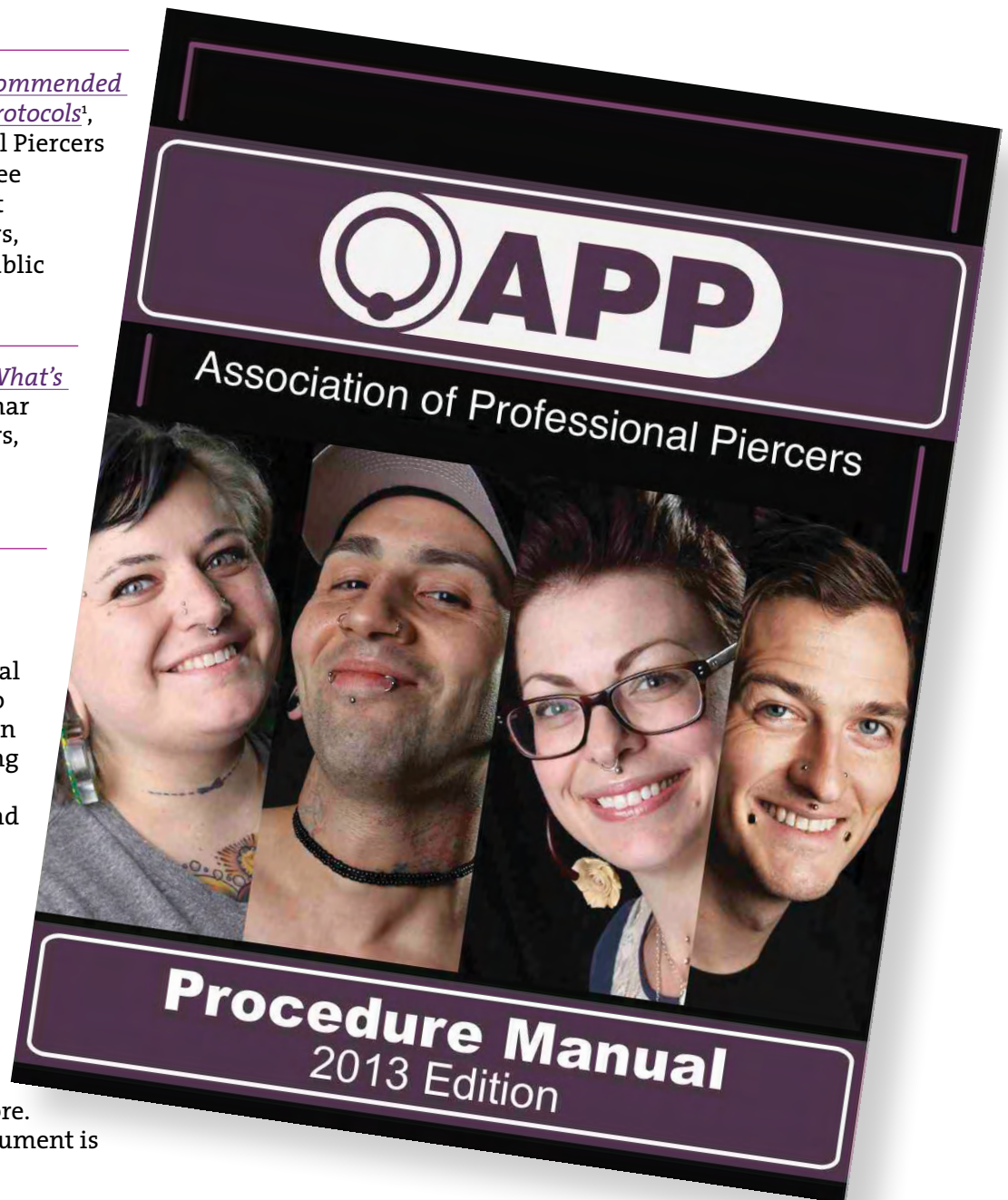
In collaboration with many experienced APP Conference speakers, the APP is offering a free webinar Online Educational Series open to all skill levels. So far, classes have been offered on a broad array of topics including Utilizing Your Phone, Studio Security during a Pandemic, and specific techniques for several different piercing placements, like tongues and daith.



The [*APP Procedure Manual \(2013 Edition\)*](#) is now available for free as a digital download; hard copies are still available in the APP Online Store. An updated version of this document is in the works.



Watch the organization's social media for upcoming and additional offerings. For all COVID-19 related updates from the Association of Professional Piercers check safepiercing.org/psa_covid-19.php.



¹"Recommended Response & Recovery Interim Protocols," Public Service Announcements: COVID-19, Association of Professional Piercers, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.safepiercing.org/docs/APP_Recommended_Post-COVID19_Closure_Reopening_interim_protocols.pdf.

²"Reopening: What's That Going to Look Like?," Online Educational Series, Association of Professional Piercers, recorded April 24, 2020, <https://youtu.be/gxIylS3CTKA>.

³"APP Procedure Manual, 2013 Edition," Publication/Store, Association of Professional Piercers, accessed April 27, 2020, https://www.safepiercing.org/procedure_manual.php.



COVID & APP EVENTS

APP CONFERENCE 2020 COVID-19 UPDATE

APRIL 30, 2020, 2:00PM PDT

25TH ANNUAL APP CONFERENCE (ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED JULY 5-10, 2020)

After a long and complicated process, the APP has successfully come to an agreement whereby we will not be penalized the \$200,000+ for cancelling the 2020 Conference.

We have felt strongly that cancelling this year's conference is the very best action for our association, our attendees, and for the industry, worldwide. Piercers, studio owners, jewelry/counter specialists, and manufacturers face numerous challenges from the impact of this health crisis. Not only is this in the interest of health and safety, but this will also allow all of us to focus on business and family at home and to make sure we are opening under safe protocols.

We will miss all of you and the positive energy we all get from our Annual Conference and Exposition. We appreciate that you have remained steadfast in face of uncertainty.

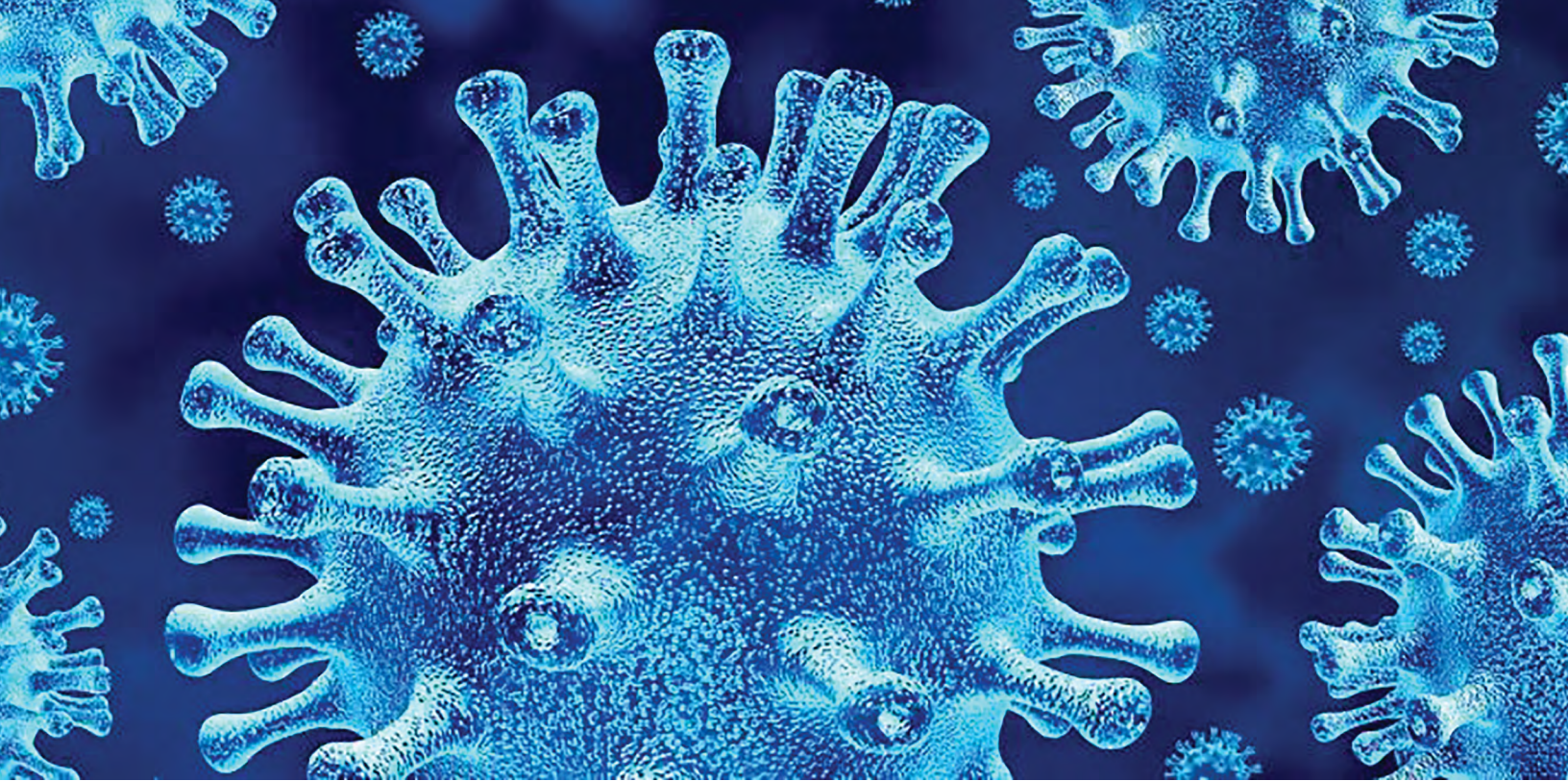
ATTENDEES

- The APP has sent an email to those who have registered for the 2020 Conference. If you need a refund now, or did not receive the email - we ask that you complete a very brief form to request a refund (in full or in part).

- If you did not request a refund by May 15th - we will roll over your payment to next year. Attendees who rollover their fees will need to register next year but will use a code to apply their credits at the time they register. If you rollover your registration fees, at any time between now and next year, May 1, 2021, you may request a full refund without penalty.
- The annual Conference is the primary source of income for the Association. Should you be financially able to contribute any part of your fees towards this year's APP operating expenses, we would greatly appreciate it. Please use the same form to designate your contribution amount.

VENDORS

- The APP has sent an email to vendors who have registered for the 2020 Conference. If you need a refund - we ask that you respond to the email and request the refund (in full or in part). If you didn't receive the email, please contact the office at info@safepiercing.org
- If you did not respond to this email by May 15th - we will roll over your payment to next



year. Vendors who rollover their fees will need to register next year but will use a code to apply their credits at the time they register. If you do a rollover, and at any time between now and next year, May 1st of 2021, decide you need a refund, the APP will honor that.

- For those companies who contributed to the Al D. Scholarship fund we ask that if you are able, to leave those funds with the APP. The APP has informed the scholars that their scholarships will rollover to next year. These scholars will fill our slots—if all scholars are able to make it next year—we will not take on additional scholars for 2021.
- The annual Conference is the primary source of income for the association. Should you be financially able to contribute a portion of your fees for this year to the APP, we would greatly appreciate it.

Regardless of your decision - know that we are all a part of a really awesome community and we will get through this.

HOTEL ROOM BLOCK

Planet Hollywood will automatically cancel any room reservation booked in the Association's room block, which will trigger the refund of any deposit/payment. It will usually take 7-10 business days before you see the credit in your account. You will get an email confirmation from Planet Hollywood.

THE NEXT SCHEDULED APP IN-PERSON EVENTS:

2021

- **Annual Conference & Exposition**
Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas — June 6 - 11.
- **APP Members' Retreat**
Atlanta, Georgia — Dates to be determined.

2022

- **Annual Conference & Exposition**
Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas — June 12 - 17.
- **APP Members' Retreat**
Atlanta, Georgia — Dates to be determined.

2023

- **Annual Conference & Exposition**
Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas — June 11 - 16.
- **APP Members' Retreat**
Atlanta, Georgia — Dates to be determined.

2020 APP MEMBERS' RETREAT/CAMP APP & IN-PERSON MEETINGS

In addition, we have cancelled the 2020 APP Members' Retreat / Camp APP and all in-person APP gatherings including board meetings and committee workgroup meetings. For questions regarding Camp cancellation, please contact Marina at mpecorino@safepiercing.org.

Please stay healthy and financially well as the world moves forward through this crisis. We look forward to seeing you June 6-11, 2021 at Planet Hollywood, Las Vegas for Conference and the APP Members' Retreat in 2021!



COVID

& THE BODY ART INDUSTRY

“... when I can finally go back to work, I am hoping that the balance I’ve learned during this time improves who I am at work and who I am as a piercer. I want to be a healthy and happy employee and practitioner who is focused and pleasant to be around.”

MEGAN NAITO

APP Member, Piercer,
Memento Mori Studios Inc.
Abbotsford, BC Canada
Writing submitted April 26, 2020

Nobody knows exactly what to expect during a pandemic. However, when isolation began, I never imagined many of the outcomes of my industry-work life.

One of the most surprising results of the pandemic has been rediscovering an identity outside of piercing. Before COVID-19, I spent most of my days working and commuting long distances to and from work. I don’t have a partner or children. After work, I would spend time on industry related tasks such as networking, building a social media presence, and editing piercing photos. Sometimes people don’t even realize how hard it is for them to turn off work mode; I didn’t even realize it was happening.

Obviously, I wasn’t always a piercer. I used to pass the time with many activities that I had forgotten I enjoy. It had been a long time since I read a book, and it has been refreshing to photograph something that is not a piercing. Sometimes it feels like engaging in activities that don’t directly benefit the industry is unproductive. I have been realizing that this is an unfortunate outlook to have. I think that realizing that I flourish better as an introvert, instead of forcing myself to be an extrovert, will allow me to maximize my potential when the pandemic subsides. I now have a better grasp on what is a healthy balance between industry and non-industry activities (for me). I want to be a well-rounded individual who can integrate with many different types of people.

It will be a long time before things return even remotely back to normal. I worry about what it will be like to source PPE, maintain a plausible amount of social distancing, and if there will be sufficient business. However, when I can finally go back to work, I am hoping that the balance I’ve learned during this time improves who I am at work and who I am as a piercer. I want to be a healthy and happy employee and practitioner who is focused and pleasant to be around.





ANNIE PATRICK BUECHLEIN

Tattoo Kaiju/Annie the Impaler

Bloomington, Indiana USA

Article submitted April 30, 2020

It was tax time in the piercing industry and all was well. Clients were spending lots of money and leaving big tips. Conference registration had opened up; piercers were buying flights and hotel rooms. Then it struck. Right in the middle of the busy season; Coronavirus (COVID-19) punched all body modification artists right in the face. Total knockout. Studios across the country were forced to close.

People waited for stimulus checks from the government and special business loans. The overwhelming amount of relief applications broke the unemployment website, because it couldn't handle the traffic. A time of uncertainty, confusion, and stress joined the world together in sadness and fear as we tried to find a "new normal". Everything was upside down.

As a piercer who has been off work for 45 days at the time of writing this article, how has this changed my life? Well let me tell you...

I am thankful that I procrastinated and didn't register yet for Conference or my other cross country trip to Colorado. It seems that this flaw paid off for once.

I am at my home with my husband, Neil, and my children, Jax (age 3) and Memphis (age 13). My older son spends time doing his schoolwork online and does conference calls with his class on Zoom. My toddler screams a lot and runs around like a stir crazy maniac. My husband just tries to hold it together, because he can see that I'm going even more crazy. Our three cats and our dog add their own unique energy.

My time of peace and quiet, and adult interaction that I normally have at my shop are over for now, and it's very hard for me to accept. I am

overwhelmed by the sibling bickering and loud noises without my refuge of work. I enjoy the time with my family, don't get me wrong, but it is also very overwhelming. The stress of this situation has turned up everyone's crazy level, especially mine. I miss my clients very much. I miss just being able to "shoot the breeze", as my grandparents would call it, or just stand around and chit chat with people. I miss hugging people and shaking hands.

I am grateful that I have been able to have the internet to connect with people during this unprecedented time. I have taken several webinar classes and done some continuing education in order to be productive, but to be honest, it's depressing for me because I know I can't practice what I'm learning about. I have texted with clients and have been able to do some online jewelry sales, which has helped me continue to be able to pay my bills. I know I'm doing better than many, so maybe I shouldn't complain, but at the same time, this is not a contest. Everyone in the world is affected by this virus and most have been hurting financially and mentally.

As a person who has always had mental health issues, the uncertainty right now has taken my anxiety to a new level. My career was really looking up. I moved studios and had been at my new location for about seven months. Everything was going great and my business was growing. New clients, better jewelry, more education, new skills, guest spots, traveling, finally being able to take care of my family and be successful in business. The sudden shutdown of that hit me hard with a sense of failure, that I had worked so hard for nothing and it was taken away so quickly.

Some states are beginning to open, but to be honest, I don't feel that it's a good idea. I don't think it's safe for me to put my fingers in another person's nose or mouth at this time. I just don't have enough information, or maybe I should say

that I have too much information. The information is all over the place and I don't know what to believe. I am overwhelmed by it all. I do know that I'm not alone, which helps. Let me be clear: I don't want anyone else to have to feel as bad and as stressed out as I feel, but having solidarity with other people and knowing we are all in this together does help. I try to make calls and texts a couple times a week and just check in on others. When I'm having a good day, I call and tell them that their bad day will pass, and good days will come; that their upset mood will also swing back and forth and surely tomorrow will be a better day.

I had a quarantine birthday. I turned 41 years old. I felt like an angry child, because I just wanted to have a party and I couldn't. I wore a tiara with cat ears and fancy makeup to Walmart; it was pretty exciting. My friend who drives an ambulance rolled up in front of my house and ran the sirens, probably scaring the neighbors to death thinking we had "The Rona". A friend stood six feet away to watch me open my gift she brought over. I got takeout from my favorite restaurants for three days in a row. I went on an online shopping spree to a new, local plant store and fed my plant addiction. My family took me to a hidden spot at the lake and made me a bonfire. It ended up being a beautiful day and a great celebration regardless. I struggle with change and change is unavoidable right now.

I have had clients call with issues that I couldn't fix because I couldn't touch them, which broke my heart. I had a client, who is a CNA, with a fresh lip piercing, get kicked in the mouth by her resident. She needed her jewelry lengthened to accommodate the excessive swelling. I couldn't get to her to help her because of the quarantine. The jewelry began to embed. I talked her through the painful process of removing the jewelry over the phone. She ended up figuring out how to remove it, but lost the piercing. It made me so upset that I couldn't help more. I had another client who couldn't get her jewelry back in after surgery. It should've been easy for me to taper the piercings open for her, but I couldn't because of the virus and now three of her piercings are closed.

I am thankful that my family loves camping and the outdoors, so we already have many supplies for social distancing in nature and outdoor activities. Nature has been my savior during these times. When I really get overwhelmed, going for a walk in the woods or just sitting in the yard helps so much. We have spent quite a bit of time hiking and fishing. We are planning a cross country camping road trip in our family van as soon as we are able. We're also working on the van and doing home improvement projects and crafts to pass the time.

As for the future, time will tell. The governor of Indiana will address our Stay-At-Home order on Friday, and may or may not open things up. I don't know what will happen to our businesses on the other side. I do know that things will continue to change. New policies and procedures will need to happen for studios to maintain the safest environments possible. More information will continue to come out and opinions may change, and that's okay. All I can do is try my best to go with the flow and allow for new beginnings. I look forward to a future of touching my clients again, going inside businesses, and gatherings with friends. I'm most looking forward to spending time with my Grandmother again. Until that day comes, I can't hug people, but I can hug trees.



SHWAYZE

Piercer, Superfly Tattoos
San Diego, California USA

Writing submitted April 29, 2020

The outbreak of COVID-19 has made me face my taxing mental health head on, as opposed to using work as a form of escape—or more so a pause on waves of self doubt. I finally worked up the courage to reach out to set up guest spot positions and heard back from a few beautiful shops. There were so many things to look forward to, but now our industry is slowed to a trickle.

What will our PPE situation look like upon re-opening? Will clients be able to pay for services since they've been displaced from work? What will be the new normal in our industry?

Luckily I've been able to attend a few zoom piercing courses offered by wonderful instructors. So it's not entirely bad, but I CANNOT wait to go back to work. I'm hoping that shops with less than ideal standards see this as an eye opener and step up their safety protocols, and as a whole our industry comes out on top after all of this. Stay safe and wash your hands!

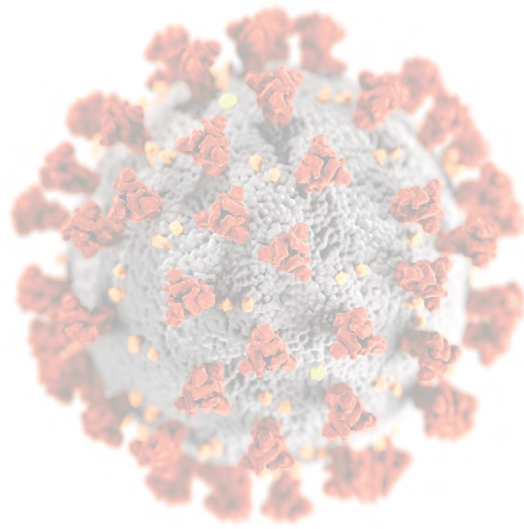


SAMANTHA JONES

Piercer, A Thin Line Tattoo
Plainfield, IL USA

Writing submitted April 26, 2020

This whole thing has opened my eyes to so much. I'm not sure when I'll feel safe enough to go back, or when I do, how long PPE will last and how hard it's going to be to get more. I miss doing what I love, but I know it's going to be months until I can pierce comfortably again. I could say so much more. I love our industry so much.



MARINA PECORINO

APP Membership Administrator

APP Member

Body Piercing by Bink

Tallahassee, FL USA

Article submitted May 5, 2020

In February, during China's original lockdown, I began watching the coronavirus situation evolve. I'm not generally one to be vigilant about news, but I started intentionally monitoring CDC and WHO updates, as well as a selection of reliable news outlets. Watching the progression of the virus, I grew evermore concerned about PPE supply chains, and the safety of my clients, community, and family. On March 2, I reached out to the managers at the studio where I work about setting up a plan for possible coronavirus closure; the idea seemed unlikely and otherworldly, but I figured the general plan could be revised for other closures, like hurricanes which my area experiences often. In hindsight, I think a plan for closures should become a studio standard, much like needlestick and *exposure control plans*¹. That said, my original expectation was closures of two weeks to a month with selfless cooperation from the general public.

Less than two weeks later, the situation in Italy and Iran quickly went from emerging to dire. I live in north Florida, and Spring Break season at the studio was starting to ramp up. Around this time, the first confirmed cases were being reported in the United States. On a daily basis, I had clients visiting from all over; New York, Mas-

sachusetts, Washington, California, and even internationally. I watched the news as these places quickly became epicenters of infection. As I huddled over clients (well within six feet), they regularly told me that they were heading on a cruise vacation or had just returned from one. I watched the news as several cruise ships became breeding grounds for the new coronavirus. My fears started mounting.

On March 12, I woke up to a sick toddler and my mind went into overdrive. As a person with moderately controlled asthma, I'm prone to lung distress at the slightest hint of illness. I knew that even if I had not exposed my family to what would become known as COVID-19, I was next in line for whatever illness my toddler was experiencing. Inevitably, bronchitis would follow, putting me firmly in the at-risk category. My fear had come home.

In an act of self preservation and to protect my studio and community, my family unit (partner, toddler, and pets) began sheltering at home and practicing strict social distancing immediately. I'm pretty sure my partner, and most others around me thought I was acting rashly with a healthy dose of paranoia. At this time, only eight people in my county of nearly 300,000 residents had received testing and we had no confirmed cases as of yet; test eligibility was incredibly difficult to receive.

Our regular housemates are sheltering elsewhere; one is still being required to go to work at a daycare center and a country club. We've kept in touch with friends and family online only. I

¹"Online Courses Library," Online Courses, Association of Professional Piercers, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://safepiercing.litmos.com/online-courses/>.

“... during these unprecedented and difficult times, I’ve found some of the most genuine comfort from my piercing tribe. I often think about how fortunate I am to have access to even my most geographically distant friends and family.”

shudder to think how the 1918 pandemic must have felt so isolating without technology. Despite housing with others and being a lifelong introvert, I have felt increasingly lonely during this experience.

Over the last two months, I have left the house only to vote early on March 15, drop a present on a doctor friend’s doorstep, and walk the neighborhood. My partner has done only necessary grocery runs. As numerous local grocery stores have reported COVID-positive employees over the last several weeks, I’ve become increasingly concerned that grocery shopping may become a main means of transmission. This week, we’ll start getting fresh food delivered to our door by a local farm alliance, reducing our need to leave the house considerably.

The studio moved to online only services a few days after my self-imposed quarantine. I worked with my studio managers to set a plan for online client consultations and to develop an online store, in hopes of providing some amount of income for both the studio and its employees. Unfortunately, response has been sparse as our nation faces massive unemployment without adequate public support.

In many ways I’ve felt unfairly privileged during this experience. I am witnessing those around me struggle; many are drowning in unfrozen debt or facing the possibility of losing their businesses. Some are experiencing the illness and passing of loved ones from a distance, unable to be physically present during their final moments. During this time, I’ve experienced untold amounts of self-reproach for what should make me feel grateful. To counteract my

feelings of survivor’s guilt, I have done what I’m able (within my own loss of wages and mental capacity) to be supportive and present to those around me. Sometimes, that comes in the form of a manufactured smile and comforting words. Other times, I’ve used my voice, wallet, or social media presence to support my favorite small businesses, performers, or makers.

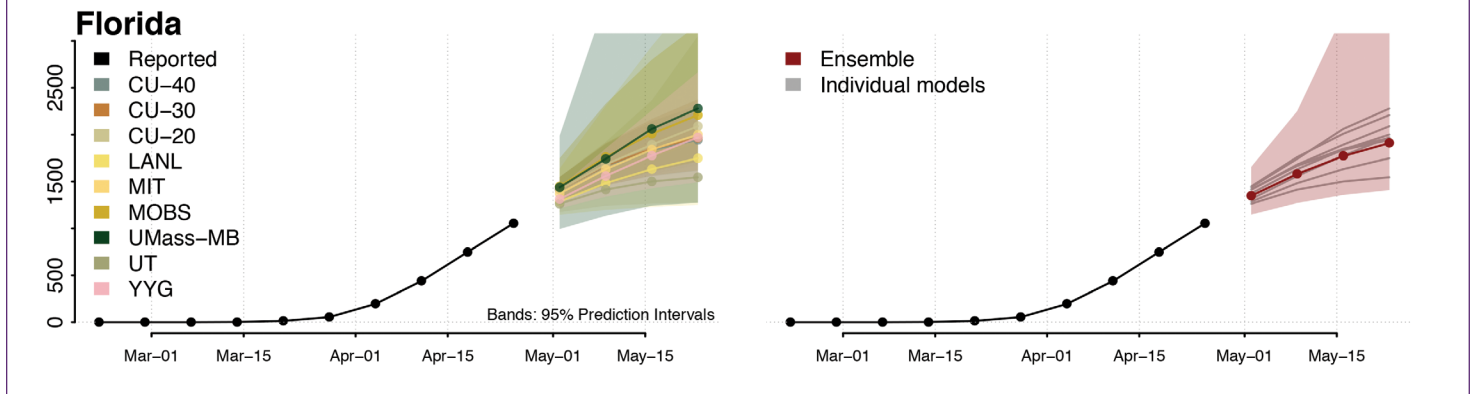
Although I’m accustomed to—and have the privilege of—working from home, my home office has changed drastically. We have crammed a second desk for my partner’s workspace (and occasionally a tiny “desk” for my child) into my



Corbin waits (sometimes patiently) for mom to play.

small office. Our normal schedule of caregivers has ceased, so my partner and I try to balance our independent workloads and full time childcare. This has required immense amounts of patience, understanding, and negotiation; it’s still a work in progress.

I am missing studio life to my core. Having left the studio for more than three years during an



Graph of Florida CDC data forecast

existential crisis, long absences from piercing are not foreign to me. That said, I've been back in the studio part-time for more than a year, and the studio environment grants me an escape from my daily mom-dom. I've definitely lost the urge to shower as often or change out of my ratty jeans. An incessant loop of children's songs runs through my head. As I'm sure is the case for many others, isolation life is taking a toll on my mental health, even with my existing toolbox of medication and coping mechanisms.

That said, during these unprecedented and difficult times, I've found some of the most genuine comfort from my piercing tribe. I often think about how fortunate I am to have access to even my most geographically distant friends and family. Checking in regularly through digital means has saved my sanity and encouraged me to take those elusive showers or step outside. I want to take this opportunity to encourage everyone to reach out to personal and professional friends. Possibly more importantly, reach out to [trained mental health providers](#)² without hesitation; even those without a pre-existing mental condition are understandably experiencing

some difficult emotions and thoughts.

As of April 29, [USAFacts.org](#)³ and the [Florida Department of Health](#) reported more than 33,000 confirmed cases and more than 1,200 deaths in Florida alone: showing a steady increase in cases, rather than decline. On the same day, despite [evidence showing a lack of testing and containment](#)⁵, Gov. DeSantis announced beginning "[Phase One](#)" of reopening Florida⁶ starting May 4. Within this phase, restaurants and retailers are allowed to resume operations at 25% capacity. Many [small business owners](#)⁷ in my area have voiced hesitance and unease about reopening so soon, as confirmed cases and COVID-related deaths continue to climb in the state.

Based on the data I have access to, my family and I plan to continue sheltering at home for the foreseeable future. I don't feel that our state (or country) has reached adequate benchmarks to ensure the safety of the public and health care professionals. I am eager for the day I feel safe interacting in person with my friends, family, colleagues, and clients, but unfortunately, that day feels farther away now than I could have ever imagined two months ago.

²"Stress and Coping," Daily Life & Coping, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>.

³"Coronavirus Locations: COVID-19 Map by County and State," Visualizations, USAFacts, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://usafacts.org/visualizations/coronavirus-covid-19-spread-map/>

⁴"2019 Novel Coronavirus Response," COVID-19 Outbreak, Florida Health, Florida Department of Health, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://floridahealthcovid19.gov/>.

⁵"COVID-19 Forecasts," Cases, Data, & Surveillance, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/forecasting-us.html>.

⁶"Governor Ron DeSantis Presentation - April 29, 2020," COVID-19 Resources, COVID-19, Ron DeSantis: 46th Governor of Florida, https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/covid19/Safe%20Smart%20Step_Templat4.29%20FINAL.pdf.

⁷Robbie Gaffney and Ryan Dailey, "Some Tallahassee Businesses Don't Feel Safe Reopening Monday," WFSU Public Media, April 30, 2020, <https://news.wfsu.org/2020-04-30/some-tallahassee-businesses-dont-feel-safe-reopening-monday>

“We constantly adapt and change. Both growth and leadership are painful, but now is the time to grow and lead!”



NICOLE SLAVICH

APP Member

Ghosts of Grace Tattoo & Piercing

Billings, Montana USA

Article submitted April 28, 2020

Experiencing the start of the American response to COVID-19 as a Piercer and fine jewelry purveyor has been awakening for me. My career has been a consecutive 15 years of learning to navigate my fellow townspeople, as well as honing my “Piercerly Ways.” The people around me are like the weather here: harsh and slow to warm. I am a liberal sundog on a hot summer day.

During the six weeks of quarantine I have endured thus far, I took a no-contact job delivering food. My fine jewelry stock is small; my concern about the supply chain and the timeline of quarantine were what cemented the decision to shut down my piercing business completely. For a while, I did offer unadvertised no-contact jewelry sales to help those who reached out to me.

Over the last five years I’ve done a ton of personal work. First, separating my identity from my work, and later developing my now rich and dynamic personality and interests outside of body modification. This year, with the help of a LCSW and a traditional SSRI treatment of my lifelong depression, I have been able to build a life I love in a place I have felt that I never fit into properly. A freak shaped peg in a conservative hole, if you will.

When the Association of Professional Piercers recommended studio closure regarding COVID-19, I felt terrified. I have had many side hustles through my piercing career, but my career is my first true love. From Saturday, March 14 at closing time to Monday night on March 16 my whole life changed. Of course, lives around the world have been changed unfathomably over the last several months!

The first week of the shutdown was almost fun. People here were just excited to have time off. I pretended to be a freshly widowed trophy wife, and lived it up alone! The next week, I got to start my delivery job. Learning a new job always presents caveats of difficulty, which serve as a distraction. Nevertheless, my heart broke when I went to the store to drain the autoclaves, unplug the electronics, and rescue the plants. I removed even the three tiny, fairly inexpensive items of jewelry I let live in the jewelry case at the studio, as hope and a calculated risk for loss.

I struggled for about two weeks. I was gentle with myself while I struggled. I listened to the healers I adore. These powerful, intuitive, blest, fat, hairy, brown women and femmes reminded me this is not our first time. We constantly adapt and change. Both growth and leadership are painful, but now is the time to grow and lead!

I began to interface more with our piercing community. I remembered to take my own advice: drink the water, video call your support system, cry when you feel like it, exercise your body, find joy in simple hobbies, rejoice for every drop of gratitude that sprinkles your prickled back!

As my brain felt better in my body, my compassion grew for my townspeople. They still acted foolishly: going in public without face coverings, having house parties, and not understanding how far six feet is, thus violating physical distancing. I understood though that their actions are directly fear based. In conservative, religious cultures (my town fits this description), denial is a prominent coping mechanism. Without trying to control others, I have begun to dig my heels in. I wear my mask, stay home before and after shifts, and step away every time someone is within my 6’ radius.

Then, my state chose to allow some non-essential businesses to re-open. I live in Eastern Montana, in the biggest city in the state with a population of 150,000. I am the only APP Mem-

22 degree halo with sundog, supra-lateral arc, upper tangent arc, and circumzenithal arc seen from the road above Mammoth Terraces in Yellowstone National Park. Photo by Diane Renkin, National Park Service, <https://flic.kr/p/Pm39Uh>.



ber for a minimum of 4 hours travel time in any direction. I work as the only piercer with two tattoo artists. My coworkers continue to be supportive of me and my heavily weighed choices regarding luxury business in pandemic times. They have made great strides in changing their business along state and local guidelines for health and safety.

After having such a low daily stress job for a while, the idea of managing clients safely and all my scary questions that loomed so closely ahead, were daunting. Lucky for me, the Association of Professional Piercers has their work on such tight lock! I received supportive, informational emails and the announcement of the “[Reopening, What’s That Going to Look Like?](#)”¹ Zoom panel meeting before I could even work myself into feeling overwhelmed.

Now, I’m working both jobs, with the intention to begin limited new piercing services on May 12. I am ramping up advertising, devising simple communications and safety signage, physically preparing the store, making the change to nearly all online jewelry sales and client interactions, switching from “Appointments Preferred” to “Appointment Only,” and taking good care of myself as I look forward to life as a Piercer in new light!

This time has allowed me to learn in so many new ways. I have given myself permission to enact authority based on my deep experience and varied talents. It’s a full rainbow coming for this old Sundog! I genuinely recognize we are all in different boats through the same storm. Your best is enough. HOLD FAST my friends, my community!

¹“Reopening: What’s That Going to Look Like?,” Online Educational Series, Association of Professional Piercers, recorded April 24, 2020, <https://youtu.be/gxIylS3CTKA>.

“COVID-19 makes me feel defeated, sad, and ultimately helpless. It’s not just about piercing and having to remain closed for so long. It’s about the systemic oppression and inequalities this virus so clearly exposes. It’s about the fact that these injustices are now so visible, yet we still have not taken any major collective action as a people to rise up and fight for a new society. I refuse to simply go back to the status quo.”



LEAH SARAH KENT

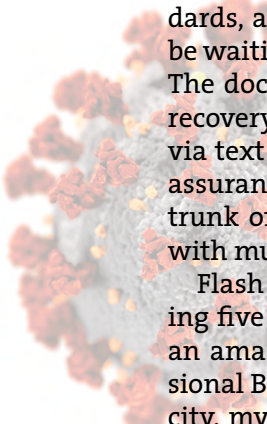
APP Member, Studio Manager & Body Piercer
Punctured Professional Body Piercing
Boston, Massachusetts USA
Article submitted April 28, 2020

In a certain sense, I have always found that one thing seems to separate me from my industry peers: time. While the majority of my fellow piercers have been posting on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic that they haven’t been away from piercing for this long within the last 5, 10, 15, even 20 years, I do not share that experience. Around this time two years ago, I was actually re-entering the industry after recovering from a major car accident which kept me away from piercing for just over two months. My studio’s last day open was March 18, 2020, and the state of Massachusetts just extended our closure until at least May 18, officially marking the same two months.

On the night of February 10, 2018 I was driving casually along with a co-worker to Taco Bell in Holyoke, MA, where I was living at the time. As we drove through our green light, we were completely blindsided; hit by a drunk driver, without any headlights on, who ran a red light. I do not

remember any of the accident itself, just waking up in a hospital bed screaming in pain. I broke five bones: my left ankle, my right shoulder, two ribs on my right side, and my right pelvis in two places. I had to wear a walking boot cast to support my ankle for three months, and used a walker (complete with grandma tennis balls on the feet) for about a month and a half.





At the time, my piercing career was only just beginning. I had fairly recently started working at a studio near Hartford, CT that made multiple false promises; the first being that they wanted me to assist in bringing the studio to APP standards, and the second being that my job would be waiting for me when I was able to work again. The doctors predicted about a three month full recovery time for me; I was “let go” from my job via text message just over a month after the reassurance. On that day, I threw my walker in the trunk of my (new) car and began the job hunt, with much higher standards this time around.

Flash forward to March of this year: I’m piercing five days a week and the studio manager at an amazing shop that I love, Punctured Professional Body Piercing, in the heart of Boston—my city, my home. I had just renewed my Association of Professional Piercers membership for a second year, and also just registered for my third APP Conference. The studio had seen significant growth over the past nearly two years since I started. In fact, I checked our numbers today and realized that on our last day of being fully open (Tuesday, March 17, 2020), we did more than double the amount in sales as on the corresponding Tuesday in March of 2019.

When we had to close due to COVID-19, I had just gotten to where I wanted to be in life. Though I know I look younger, I just turned 30 this past December. This is another way in which time seems to separate me from my peers; while most piercers around the same age as me (or even younger) are now quite established in their careers, I did not enter the industry until 2015, after spending five years getting my B.A. from Smith College and M.A. from Brandeis University in Women’s and Gender Studies. I proudly hang my diplomas in my piercing room mostly due to the fact that they always impress the parents of my minor clients.

Though I like to joke about being a piercer with a Master’s, the unfortunate truth, which ultimately circles back to COVID-19, is that I stepped away from the world of both academia and activism because I was simply burned out. I realized that, no, I was not going to change the world. So I became a piercer, because that is what I love. As someone who has also struggled with mental illness since my early teenage years, I decided that if I was going to continue on, I was going to do something that made me genuinely happy, not something that made me feel defeated, sad, and ultimately helpless.

COVID-19 makes me feel defeated, sad, and ultimately helpless. It’s not just about piercing and having to remain closed for so long. It’s about the systemic oppression and inequalities this virus so clearly exposes. It’s about the fact that these injustices are now so visible, yet we still have not taken any major collective action as a people to rise up and fight for a new society. I refuse to simply go back to the status quo. Yes, I want to go back to work, of course I do, because I get to be one of those lucky people who loves their job. But I do not want to go back to a society that values the economy over human lives. A society that calls its sacrifices for capitalism “essential workers” despite the fact that most of them get paid an already vastly under-inflated minimum wage. I want a socialist revolution. I want what I wanted when I decided to stop wanting it, stop working for it, and now there may not be anything left to want, for me, in life.

That is how COVID-19 has not only impacted my industry work life, but also my hopes (or now lack thereof) for the future.

HALEY GRUMBLES

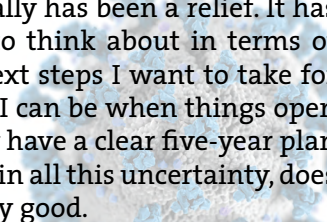
Apprentice Piercer

Plano, Texas USA

Writing submitted April 27, 2020

I started my apprenticeship in August, so I was about seven months in when our shop had to close. I was finally feeling like I was on the right path and taking steps towards a career I’ve always wanted and felt passionate about. We have been shut down now for over a month and I feel like I have lost most of what I’ve learned. I’m worried that when I go back I will be almost starting completely over.

As a positive, the online webinars have kept me busy and my mind fresh around piercing. Also, having a break from working 70+ hours a week at two jobs to make the apprenticeship even feasible financially has been a relief. It has also given me a lot to think about in terms of my future and the next steps I want to take for myself to be the best I can be when things open back up. I think I now have a clear five-year plan for my career. Which, in all this uncertainty, does have me feeling pretty good.





Vicky shows off their new pronoun knuckle tattoos done by Gerry at Tattoo Zoo

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE STUDIO ENVIRONMENT

VICKY TICKY WILLIAMS

APP Member, Owner
Elemental Body Adornment
Victoria, BC Canada

Creating a space that is welcoming is extremely important, and, thankfully, not difficult. There are many simple ways you can make your space more accessible to the many clients that would otherwise feel out of place—even if only slightly—in your studio space.

In the case of making your studio more inviting to the LGBTQIA+ community, I would suggest having an area on your waiver where clients can indicate their pronouns. This is a great way to be visibly inclusive. Our waivers have an area clients can circle “he/him”, “she/her”, “they/them” or they can fill in the blank space offered for other pronouns; for example, “zie/hir”, “xe/

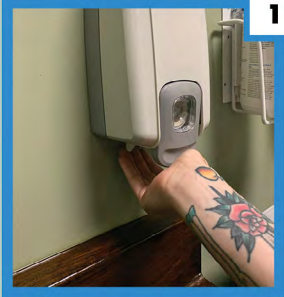
xem”, and many more! This helps normalise the process of asking for pronouns and educates the masses that there are more than two options available - as a young non-binary person it would have been huge for me to see this!

I recommend avoiding the term “preferred pronouns” as it can delegitimize a person’s gender identity and pronouns to being a preference rather than wholly authentic.

Having a line for the “name you go by” helps to make sure that clients are referred to correctly, for those that have legal dead names (names they no longer associate with) or those that go by nicknames.

Another simple way to help clients feel seen is by having trans and pride flags or stickers proudly displayed. This helps show you are supportive year-round, not only during Pride months!

FACEMASK BEST PRACTICES



1
Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.



2
Remove a mask from the box and make sure there are no obvious tears or holes in either side of the mask



3
The colored side of the mask faces out, the top has a metal edge.



4
Hold the mask by the ear loops. Place a loop around each ear.



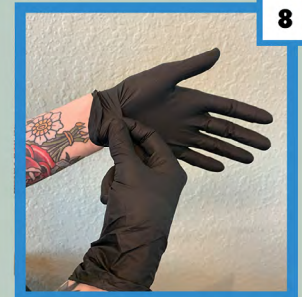
5
Mold or pinch the metal edge to the shape of your nose, this is necessary for a good seal, and to reduce fogging of eye protection.



6
Pull the bottom of the mask over your mouth and chin.



7
The mask should stay in this position until it is discarded. Do not adjust the mask with gloves on.



8
After the procedure remove your gloves.



9
Wash your hands with soap and water.



10
Remove the mask via Earloops. Avoid touching the front of the mask as it is contaminated.



11
Discard mask in the trash



12
Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.

SAFEPIERCING.ORG

HOW TO HAND WASH



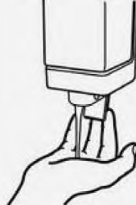
Duration of the entire procedure: 40-60 seconds

0



Wet hands with water;

1



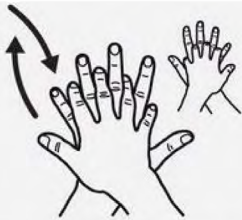
Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces;

2



Rub hands palm to palm;

3



Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa;

4



Palm to palm with fingers interlaced;

5



Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked;

6



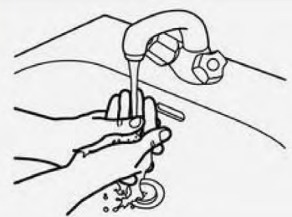
Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa;

7



Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa;

8



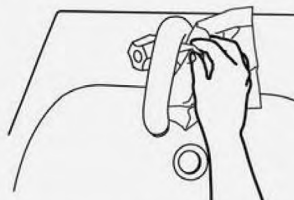
Rinse hands with water;

9



Dry hands thoroughly with a single use towel;

10



Use towel to turn off faucet;

11



Your hands are now safe.

THE GAY EAR

LYNN LOHEIDE & MARGO DELLAQUILLA

In piercing studios around the country the question is still asked today, “Does one side have any special meaning? You know, what ear is the gay ear?” Despite changing times and modern progress many people still associate piercings—particularly a single piercing in the lobe—as a symbol of one’s sexuality. We’ve all given a little internal eye roll when we have to field this question in our studios and most of us have a carefully prescribed response. Any of us may not understand the history of this concept. It’s actually quite fascinating to take a look behind how one specific piercing developed such recognition as a gay symbol.

To find out how an ear piercing could carry such symbolism we need to look back to the ‘70s and ‘80s in America. A different time when it was still perilous to be LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual or allied) and publicly out, and there were no legal or social protections for people who were. Many people lived in fear of losing their jobs, homes, families, or being outright attacked. The AIDS crisis was beginning and both hate and fear concerning anything gay were at an all-time high.

People gathered in secret bars, hung around dark trails in local parks, and used various forms of code based on location to subtly tell people they were gay. These codes were a form of protection, a small way to tell people in-the-know what their preferences were without outing themselves and potentially changing, or even ending, their lives. We, as piercers, generally know and love the hanky code (raise your hand if you own a purple one!) This same philosophy also helped to coin “The Gay Ear”. Born from these codes is a phrase few now remember as familiar, “Left is right and right is wrong” (“wrong” here meaning gay). This cultural phrase spread across communities in an era when piercing was just blossoming. Women were daring to wear second and third earlobe piercings and a particularly rebellious person may pierce their cartilage. This phrase cemented in many minds that the singular right lobe piercing on a man was synonymous with being gay. We can even look at this

New York Times article from 1991¹ that mentions a piercing in the right ear as a “discreet symbol” of one’s sexuality. We must remember this was a time when discretion was, for some, life or death. Like a game of telephone, this phrase spread, and small changes happened along the way. In some areas, it was reversed, and the left ear was a signifier. Others changed the script entirely: both ears could signify one was bi or trans, and a few on one ear had specific meanings in a local scene. As the phrase became more widespread and used as a way of outing folks, some opted to pierce the opposite ear associated in their area to remain hidden. All of this served to muddle the waters until no one could agree which ear was, in fact, “the gay ear”.

It wasn’t long before that phrase became lost, and many people forgot which ear meant what, as if any ear ever meant anything. The internet, and even before that the “Ask x” columns and library question cards, were filled with men agonizing over which was the ear they were “supposed” to pierce. How could they wear the adornments they desired while maintaining their heterosexuality; or, perhaps, secretly inquiring which they could pierce to flaunt their homosexuality. Over time the meaning seemed to matter less and less as piercings became more popular and many folks cared not what anyone else thought. Their adornments were for them and them alone. As early as the ‘90s people had forgotten the meaning as piercings were now more about punk rock and youthful rebellion than an underground symbol. Time passed and it became ok to be out. We didn’t need to hide behind antiquated codes or symbols; we could be out and proud!

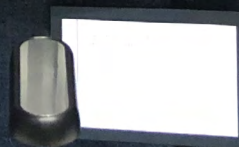
While discrimination still exists in many shapes and forms, even now in 2020, fortunately, we don’t need to hide as much as we did then. That being said, education and reclamation of what was once used to hurt or oppress us can be a powerful way to stand in the face of discrimination. This is a great piece of history to share with other piercers, clients, and friends, to help remove the stigma and keep our history alive. After all, given our shared history, all piercings are a little bit gay!

¹Trish Hall, “Piercing Fad Is Turning Convention on Its Ear,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/19/news/piercing-fad-is-turning-convention-on-its-ear.html>.



Photos of Gauntlet founder and out gay man Jim Ward from issue 24 of *Piercing Fans International Quarterly* (1985). Jim acquired his first ear piercing in 1969 when the right ear was very much the traditional “gay” ear. Like many gay men of that time, he still opted to pierce the left ear. The initial piercing was a bit low; sometime in Gauntlet’s early years, he did a second one above it for which he designed these unique jewelry pieces. Sadly, they disappeared when Gauntlet closed in 1998. After he moved to San Francisco in the early 1990s, he finally had his right ear pierced.







Fakir's memorial altar at the APP Conference, 2019. Photo by Marina Pecorino

FROM THE BODY PIERCING ARCHIVE, 2019

DUSTIN ALLOR

This past summer we lost a most iconic and beloved member of the body piercing community. It is hard to imagine what the landscape of the piercing industry would look like without Fakir Musafar. He was part of the group who brought body piercing into mainstream western culture from underground society in the 1970s. Fakir inspired countless people to become piercers, taught the skill to approximately 2,000 attendees of his piercing workshop, moved many to try suspension and urged us to claim our bodies as our own, especially through body modification. He firmly believed that piercing was sacred, magical, and could be a special moment for all involved. His life was spent spreading that message and seeking the spirit through exploring and testing the limits of his body. This year's Body Piercing Archive exhibit unfolded many of the lives, hobbies, jobs, and performances of the multifaceted Fakir Musafar.

Walking into the exhibit was overwhelming in the best sort of way. There was so much information—so many visuals—that it was hard to know where to look. Each time I went in, there were things I hadn't noticed previously. It would have taken me a couple of focused hours to take in all the information. The outer walls were lined with banners. The inner walls had four alcoves with various displayed items. Several banners featured large photos of Fakir embodying his different personas. There were other banners that stood out to me: the timeline that shared childhood pictures, some of influential people in his life, covers of his *Body Play* magazines, and collages of the group photos from nearly every class of the Fakir Intensives.

Then there were the alcoves. One held books and images that inspired and guided a young Fakir to try so many unconventional practices. A few items in particular caught my eye: Fakir's yoga book from the 1950s



Top to bottom, views of the Body Piercing Archive's Fakir Musafar exhibit at the 2019 APP Conference — visitors enter the exhibit; two views of the exhibit; Annie Sprinkle conducting a tour of the exhibit. Photos by Marina Pecorino

and *National Geographic* from Fakir's childhood where he got the idea to perform his first piercing on himself at age 14. Another area had masks, homemade eyelets for stretching his nipple piercings, some of Fakir's septum jewelry, and articles he had written. There was a section that had a bed of nails, a bed of blades, a kavadi frame, a suspension frame, and other inventions of Fakir's that I'm not sure have names. Most of these devices were featured in Fakir's early self photography. Having been born in a rural area in 1930, out of necessity he developed a resourceful and inventive ability. A large portion of the objects in the exhibit were things he made at home by hand. Rarely disposing of his creations, the BPA was able to acquire or borrow many of them from his wife, Cléo Dubois. It was fabulous to see classic Fakir photos right next to the actual items he made and was wearing in the portrait.

There was a screen toward the back of the exhibit playing the Mark and Dan Jury film *Dances Sacred and Profane* starring Fakir, Jim Ward, and Charles Gatewood. Mirroring that was a second screen dedicated to performances he had done, featuring video from one of his European performances. Between those was information on *RE/Search #12: Modern Primitives*, the publication where so many of us discovered Fakir for the first time.

The last alcove in the exhibit was the most solemn. The exhibit overall celebrated Fakir's life, but the last alcove honored his death. Fakir felt that altars were important. He would make one at the end of every piercing class, a place to look to for focus, to display images and objects that had meaning to him and to help inspire a particular mindset he was looking for. The last alcove of the exhibit, with bright yellow and red walls, was an altar to Fakir. It displayed a large photo of him, photos of those close to him who had also passed, images of deities he was drawn to, fresh fragrant flowers, candles, and a few personal items like his chest spears. When he announced that he was sick and had limited time left, Fakir asked that instead of emails or phone calls, that people hand write and mail him letters if they had anything they wanted to share with him. Hundreds of letters came in and he read all the words of love and thanks before he left us. A selection of those cards were strung from the center back wall of the alcove, extending to either side of the door, framing the altar and giving the space a sense of depth, layers, and sentiment.

Fakir was so many people wrapped up in one. It was impossible to know everything and everyone he had been in his life. Depending on how you knew him, you would connect and learn about different aspects of his personality and

interests, hearing different stories of his past. In addition to all the visuals in the exhibit, docents who were personally known to Fakir gave tours. Each had unique experiences and insight on who Fakir was, having known him in a variety of circles and points of his life. Several of the instructors from the Fakir Intensives gave tours, as well as friends of Fakir's including Allen Falkner and Annie Sprinkle. Each offered unique flavors, new insight and things to learn about Fakir. Hearing their stories really brought Fakir's memory to life in a vivid interactive way and I wish I could have seen all the tours.

Working closely with Fakir's wife, Cléo, the BPA team put together an amazing and moving exhibit. Fakir was always touched and awed by the gratitude, credit, and honor people extended to him. I think he would be absolutely blown away and speechless by the beautiful display and celebration of his life that portrayed so much of who he was. To Paul King, Becky Dill, Devin Ruiz, and all your behind the scenes helpers, thank you for all your hard work in putting together such a rich and beautiful commemoration of Fakir's life. It was wonderful to get to celebrate Fakir's life together with the bulk of the piercing community this year at the APP Conference.



Dustin Allor and
Fakir Musafar



Left to right, Membership Committee and collaborators at the 2019 APP Conference & Exposition — top row: Jef Saunders, Cody Vaughn, W. Barron, Pablo Perelmuter; middle row: Vivi Madero, Johnny Velez, Sabrina Egan, Marina Pecorino; bottom row: Monica Sabin and Aaron Pollack. Photo by Autumn Swisher.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE

APP MEMBERSHIP CORNER—SERIES 2

Membership Committee

- Monica Sabin, Membership Liaison
- Pablo Perelmuter, Membership Coordinator
- W. Barron
- Sabrina Egan
- Johnny Velez
- Cody Vaughn
- Cozmo Whitest
- Kristina Outland
- Marina Pecorino, Membership Administrator

In *Issue 88*, we discussed tips to help prospective members through the application process. Since then, we have begun training two new membership committee volunteers - Cozmo Whitest and Kristina Outland. In addition to training on application processing, they have been helping us with managing compliance documents for current Members of the APP.

WHAT IS COMPLIANCE?

In order to maintain your membership with the APP, you must provide us with certain information to keep your file current and your membership in good standing. This information includes the following criteria:

- Spore test results—*each autoclave must be spore tested at least monthly*
- Bloodborne Pathogen training*—*renewed annually regardless of certificate expiration date*
- CPR—*annually or until expiration date on certificate*
- First Aid—*every three years or until expiration date on certificate*

** If you've taken the APP's Bloodborne Pathogens course through Litmos, you will still need to upload the certificate to your Member Profile. These are two different servers and are not connected.*

Annual membership certificates are sent to the address on-file when annual dues are paid and membership is in good standing. To participate in elections—by nominating or voting, as well as running for a Board position—requires that your compliance documents are up to date. You can do this by logging into the safepiercing.org [Member Area](#) and verifying that your [Membership Requirements](#) (BBP, First Aid, CPR, and Spore Tests) are on file and up-to-date and your membership dues have been paid.

KEEP US UPDATED

Remodeled your studio? Relocated to a different studio? If your situation has changed, keep us in the loop. This allows us to keep your membership record accurate and make sure you are displayed properly on our [Member Directory](#).

We currently give you up to sixty days to make us aware of these changes. You can update us of any changes by sending an email to members@safepiercing.org or to our Membership Administrator at mpecorino@safepiercing.org.

TRAVELING & ADVERTISING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Whether you are a full time traveling piercer or just enjoy the occasional work vacation, many of us have taken to traveling and piercing at different studios around the world. It is awe inspiring to see our industry grow into this network of piercers that can work almost anywhere, serving clients all over. As an APP Member, it is important to know how traveling plays into advertising your membership.

“When the membership logo is used, it must be used in a way that clearly shows the membership belongs to the individual, not the studio. While membership belongs to the individual, APP membership is dependent upon adherence to not only the personal criteria set forth by the Association, but also the current environmental standards in which the Member operates. Therefore, individual membership is only recognized and advertisable when operating in a studio environment that has been reviewed by the APP to meet standards and has current APP Business Members on staff.”

This means that we should not be using the APP Member logo or other means of advertisement (APP Member hashtag, etc) when piercing at studios that have not been reviewed to meet standards. While traveling, we must uphold the Member's Code of Conduct agreement as well, particularly the health & safety requirements, such as the use of jewelry that meets the APP [Minimum standard](#), proper sterilization of all items, etc.

You can find the complete [APP Member Code of Conduct and Logo Agreement](#) on the APP's website and within your Member Profile.

Sincerely, thank you for your continued support. Our membership has grown so much over the years. We appreciate your patience and support as we continue to learn and grow together.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns, we want to hear from you. Reach out to committee members - all of them are extremely dedicated volunteers that are eager to help others in this industry. And, as always, you can email us at members@safepiercing.org.

We are all in this together!

POC SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE



KEIANA “KOOKIE” LYNN


To our Donors,

With the support of 64 community members, we raised \$4,555.53 to give 7 piercers the opportunity to attend the Association of Professional Piercers Conference. Eduardo Chavarria, Miro Hernandez, and myself are proud to support with continued education, along their piercing journeys.

- Aaron May
- Angie Ortiz
- Anthony Lewis
- Deron Carter
- Frances Sesay
- Jose Zuniga
- Kay Warren

With the rise of COVID-19 and the cancellation of the upcoming Association of Professional Piercers Conference, we intend to continue supporting recipients by honoring 2020 scholarships in 2021. Conference admission tickets will remain booked, while rooms and flights will be re-booked, when possible. In the event that a recipient is no longer piercing in 2021, their resources will be forfeited to the next qualifying applicant.

For further questions or concerns, please email KonnichiwaKookie@gmail.com.

A photograph of a wooden bridge over a stream in a forest. The bridge is made of light-colored wood and has a simple railing. It spans a narrow stream with dark, reflective water. The surrounding forest is dense with green trees and foliage. The scene is peaceful and scenic.

I had the pleasure of attending the 5th annual Camp APP this past year in Oregon. Usually, this event is held in Georgia, however, Bethrah Szumski decided to go above and beyond and organize this event entirely on the other side of the country! I honestly can't thank her enough for facilitating what was one of the best experiences of my life.

It was held at Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp right outside of Portland, Oregon, so it was a very easy and scenic drive for me. The weather was exactly what I hoped to get camping in Oregon - humid, cold, and rainy. These conditions may not sound super ideal for some, but it was MORE than perfect for me. Any walk or hike that I was a part of was just gorgeous. Moss was everywhere, there was a waterfall not far, and I was in my element.

Where do I even start with this amazing experience? The beginning of the first day was intense for me; mainly because there was an opportunity to introduce yourself in front of everyone at Camp. I've always opted out of things like this, so this made it nerve-racking for me. That said, I did it and this paved the way for an incredible week actually making new friends and memories. My personal goal was to not hide in my room the entire time like I do at Conference and actually start being able to integrate myself into our giant piercing family.

All of the classes were so fun and constantly kept my attention with intriguing information. I'll start with my favorite class, Charging Windmills and Slaying Sacred Cows with Jef Saunders. This class was impressive in its goal and execution. Cale DiFrancesco is an aesthetic genius and had a million tips and tricks on achieving your goal results for multiple piercing placements.

The workshops were well planned out and very fun to be a part of because of how hands-on they were. Rob Hill helped me get over being a little spooked by polishing wheels. Pablo Perelmuter showed us things about Statim cassettes that I went home and immediately applied to our cassette at our studio. I love improving/modifying needles, so it should go without saying that Becky Dill's Needle Improvement workshop was my favorite. John Johnson, Cale DiFrancesco, and April Thomas's workshop for Web Design, Content Sharing, and Email Newsletters definitely opened my mind to ways to appeal and be seen by my local community. We also had a team-building exercise where each group got on a huge seesaw and you're supposed to stay balanced at all times while other people get on. My group was the only group that crawled onto it to make it work. I truly don't understand how the other groups stood up the whole time.

CAMP APP REVIEW

ANGEL HORSLEY


PHOTOS BY APRIL THOMAS



Carl Kimberly takes a moment between activities and classes to reflect by the pond.



**Matt Bavougian rests after serving
delicious home cooked food for all
70+ Campers.**



Monica Sabin is an absolute angel. They came up with the idea to put together the Piercing Ninja Warrior Relay Race. This race was so much fun and I'm not just saying that because I was on the winning team (Goldemorts 4 lyfe). It was very dead on with the tasks that we deal with on a day to day basis being piercers. I have awful social anxiety (bless everyone involved for their patience), anyone that knows me can tell you that. This race showed me that my peers are just people and I shouldn't be so intimidated to make those connections with them and just be myself.

Each night ended with something very fun that involved everyone. The first night was bingo, the second night was a Campfire Talk APP session, and the third night was a raffle and closing ceremony. The Campfire session with John Johnson, Bethrah Szumski, and Paul King was such an eye-opening experience. I wish I could thank them more than I already have for sharing themselves with so many people. The closing ceremony was essentially a follow up on your introduction at the beginning of the week and if you got what you wanted out of Camp. A lot of people got way more out of camp than they intended and it was lovely hearing everyone's experiences. There were so many feelings during the closing ceremony and I thank everyone that shared themselves.

The last thing I want to express my gratitude for: the food. Everything that was made was delicious and incredibly accommodating to anyone with dietary restrictions. Seriously, I ate better this week than I have all year. After going back and forth on attending Camp, I'm so happy I did. I will see y'all every year I can because Camp is not something I'm willing to skip anymore. Thank you again to everyone involved in facilitating such a life-changing event.

CAMP APP REVIEW

ANGEL HORSLEY

PHOTOS BY APRIL THOMAS



Top to bottom, Matthew Masterton, Ryan Tantay, (back, Aaron Solomon and Kelly Carvara), Jay Johnson, and Cale DiFrancesco socializing and getting ready for the next class to begin. A group collaborates during a Needle Improvement techniques workshop discussion led by Becky Dill. Directional signs point Campers in the right direction during their stay at Mt. Hood Kiwanis Camp.



Top to bottom, Randy and the Crushers discuss team strategy as they prepare for the Piercing Ninja Warrior competition. Monica Sabin prepares to see their idea for the Piercing Ninja Warrior competition come to life for the first time. Pablo Perelmuter explains Statim cassette maintenance to a small group during a workshop discussion.



UKAPP REVIEW

W. BARRON

*Right, W. Barron;
below, Attendees
in one of Cale's
classes., Photo by
Cale DiFrancesco*

As I sit here in the airport waiting to start my nine-hour flight back home, I reflect about how it is still so surreal to me that merely four days ago I traveled 4,000 miles to attend my first UKAPP conference in Manchester, UK. Prior to me making this trek I had never been off the continent before or instructed a class solo. Let me tell you this was one of my most enjoyable experiences at a conference I've had. I expect that this is what it must have been like for the early days of the APP Conference.

Held at the Radisson Blu Edwardian in Manchester, England, the hotel was gorgeous and not what it seems from the street. According to the hotel's website, it is set inside the historic Grade II-listed Free Trade Hall, one of the UK's oldest and most iconic buildings. The fifth annual conference was on the fourth floor that has one main lobby area and three classrooms total. While the room prices were a little high, the hotel was central to some more affordable options, which is great for attendees that may be on a tighter budget in their travels. Nonetheless, the interior of the hotel and conference were modern and updated to suit the needs for the UKAPP's fast-growing event for this year and the next.

The conference was very simplistic in function, with no computers in use. To sign in you just go up to the registration desk and show your identification and proof that you are industry affiliated. They look for you on a printed list, check your name off, hand you a blank conference badge to handwrite your name down, then you move down the line to pick whatever badge ribbons suit you best and then off you go to start your three days of learning. All classes were on



a first come first serve basis. At the time of the class, you just jumped in the line that was forming at that specific classroom. When the doors opened, you entered the room and gave the volunteer your name, which was then checked off at the door on a printed list with all the attendees' names on it again, so you got the credit for attending the class.

Each day started with a morning class at around 10 am - 11 am, then afterwards an hour lunch break for the attendees, preceded by an hour lunch for the vendors at the expo. It was definitely a different change of pace to have time built into the day to not have to worry about how you were going to eat without missing any classes. The rest of the class day lasted until about 6 pm. After lunch is when the bulk of the classes were scheduled; it was very difficult to decide what to attend as there were so many phenomenal classes to choose from.

The class that I had the pleasure of teaching for the first time was *Versatility of Needle Blanks*. The idea for the class was to introduce needle blanks and various ways you can apply them to be an effective disposable tool in your studio. I covered what a needle blank and transfer pin were, and several the ways the attendees are able to use them into disposable clamps. The feedback that I have received from the organizers has told me that my class was well received and really got the gears turning for a lot of piercers that attended the conference. By no means was my class the pinnacle of the conference. Other great classes that were offered include the following, just to name a few.



- *Cannula vs. Needles*
- *PA FUNdamentals*
- *Lumps and Bumps*
- *Aseptic Technique*
- *Self Care for the Happy Piercer*
- *Building your UKAPP studio*
- *Introduction to High-End Jewellery*
- *Jewellery and Studio Presentation*
- *Sexuality and Body Piercing*
- *Doubles, Triples and Beyond*
- *Ear Complexity*

Overall the conference came in at 126 attendees with 12 vendors. It was amazing and ran very smoothly. The vibes were calm, cool, and collective. The list of educators and instructors were fantastic, every one of them had passion you could see reflecting through each of their presentations. My favorite part about the whole conference was the attendees; everyone was very welcoming, kind, eager to listen and learn about what every instructor—including myself—had to say or teach. The engagement was refreshing for me and showed that we are all truly teachers and learners in this industry, no matter if you have six months or 20+ years experience. I can't wait to see what the UKAPP comes up with for this event in 2020. I would highly recommend this conference to any piercer, new or old, looking to experience something new in their career.

“The engagement was refreshing for me and showed that we are all truly teachers and learners in this industry, no matter if you have six months or 20+ years experience.”



Above, Cale DiFrancesco (APP Board Member), Charlie Remy LeBeau (UKAPP Board Member), and David Osborne (UKAPP Board Member), Photo by Cale DiFrancesco, APP Outreach Liaison; Left, Nikki Proctor, Helen Houghton, & Lola Slider —Source: @boldandgoldpiercingart on Instagram



18-22 / AGO / 2019

GRUPO DE ESTUDOS DE PIERCING (GEP)

BETHRAH SZUMSKI

Brazil! That's all I could think about for months before I went. This would be my first time to the country and that idea is always super exciting to me. I first met André Fernandes in Mexico for LBP and had been hearing news of the organization and event in South America. There was much discussion about the difficulty, financial and practical for South Americans to get to the US and Mexico for education. When I started looking at tickets, that made a lot of sense. The flight to Sao Paulo was nine hours. It's pricey and requires a lot of extra work to bring in foreign language speakers from the US. It's a real honor to get that invitation.

Sao Paulo is grimy and amazing. Unlike many places I've visited, every place I went to shop took credit cards. Maybe more practical than carrying cash? The petty crime rate is off the hook. I was never worried about my safety at any moment though. The first day was only really about FOOD. Delicious food plus more delicious food. Small groups, big groups, food, food, food. Of course, I had sprained my ankle within ten minutes of arrival so part of the day was an exploration of the Brazilian pharmacy. The only thing better than a grocery store in a new country is a pharmacy. SO many strange items I can't read the labels on. I found some good (non-narcotic) meds that would see me through. I had to repeat this mission home-bound for the head cold I got at the end.... Travel while you're young folks: it'll kick your butt!

Buses gathered to take the whole attendee group to the venue in the afternoon of the next day. The drive was beautiful. Jungles, mountains, and waterfalls the whole way to the beach. The venue is a quaint beach resort during off season. The beach was right across the street. It rained most of the week, but it hardly mattered. The place was lovely. Orchids everywhere and jungle noises really made me feel how different of a place I was in.

The set up felt super relaxed, but the organizers were on top of everything. They did this thing that I found super interesting from an organizational perspective. First

let me qualify with the fact that a lot can fall down that will affect whether a speaker can do a good class. This has created a bit of hyper vigilance for me and some other travel educators I know. Things like, will there be a computer? Some events are so loose you never know just what to expect. So, here is the thing I really enjoyed. They managed all things with no sense of urgency. Normally, I would consider this with concern. No need, it was just good planning. There was an AV person available at all times to help with anything. Even with a language barrier everyone was SO amazingly helpful. Meals were set up buffet style and really nice. Vegan options for each, including desert.

The sentiment that "the people in my town won't buy gold" is time and again proving to be false. The expo boasted quite a few gold jewelers that work exclusively for the South American market. Importing from the US can be quite problematic. I'm generally impressed by companies that have a clear vision of what they are doing and for whom. It was great to see a lot of support from bigger companies as well.

If you know me, you know I'm a talker. Even so, I find some things quite difficult to express. One of those things about this event was how very impressed I was with the organizers André and his partner, Tati. Everything I could think to say just seemed sappy. Really though, I'm a fan. These guys really put together an amazing event. The things they do to help people come to the event just blew my mind. There is an eye for the big picture of piercing in South America. It's the ONLY event I've EVER been to where female identified piercers well outnumber the men. While I was still one of the very few female speakers, I'm confident that will change quickly in Brazil. There was a unity and mindset amongst these women that I can only describe as FIERCE. Also, a big thank you to Roberta, the event interpreter. It's one thing to stand a few hours to teach over the week. Another to stand, translating new ideas, in real time all day, every day.

PIERCING STUDY GROUP FROM BRAZIL

GEP Statistics

Numbers of the three congresses held in the last three years

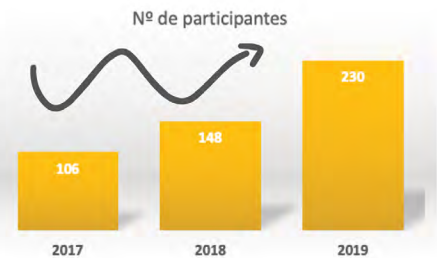
International Congress for Professional Body Piercers



PIERCING STUDY GROUP FROM BRAZIL

Number of participants

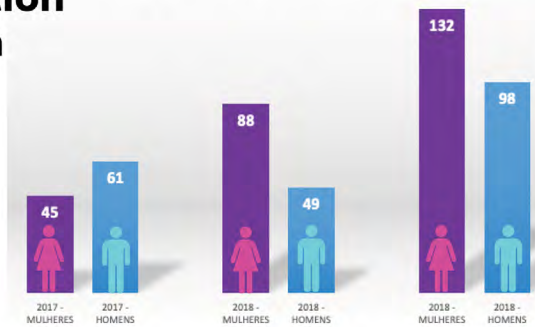
per year



PIERCING STUDY GROUP FROM BRAZIL

Participation of women and men

Participação de mulheres e homens



Country participants

MEXICO
ARGENTINA
CHILE
COLOMBIA
PERU
URUGUAY
USA
SPAIN
FRANCE

Supporting Companies

AURIS
BIOMETAL
DIAMOND MX
GOLD DIAMOND
GOLDR PIERCING
GORILLA GLASS
INDUSTRIAL STRENGHT
KIWII
MAYA
MAZARTE
MILLENNIUM
NAMASTE
MILLENNIUM
PAINFUL
RARO
SACRED SYMBOLS
SALO
THRENUN

GENTIAN VIOLET CONCERNS & ALTERNATIVES

BRIAN SKELLIE

APP Medical Liaison

June 12, 2019

GENTIAN VIOLINS? GENTIAN VIOLENCE?

Stop use and dispose of gentian violet immediately? Piercers in Canada were recently informed by Health Canada that they were not allowed to use products containing gentian violet.¹ A recall was put in place due to a link to cancer risk. At least one manufacturer voluntarily discontinued sales of their products and their license was cancelled.

The piercers who were notified, exercised prudence to stop use immediately, then learned more about the concerns and responded with questions. They reviewed the toxicology evidence provided which was based on high levels of oral consumption and presented a logical case for safe use as a marking product. The health authorities reviewed these responses, interacted with manufacturers of surgical marking pens, and came to the conclusion that little to no gentian violet is released to the human body in this application due to the dilution of the product and short duration of exposure.

HISTORY

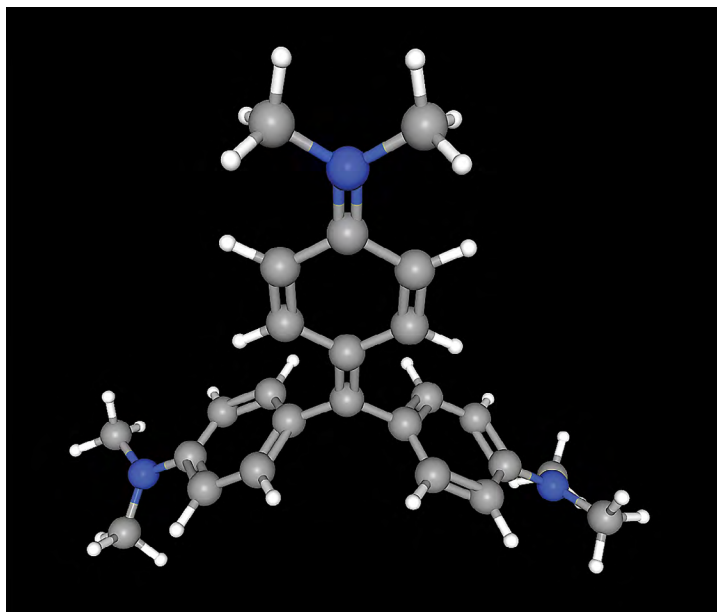
History of surgical skin-marking technique²

[My sketch of the chemical formula from PubChem—NIH³]

Gentian violet was identified as genotoxic carcinogen by the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (Proposition 65)⁴. This regulation requires the State of California to publish a list of chemicals known to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity and to update the list at least annually. Studies have tended to focus on the carcinogenicity of the oral rather than topical route of exposure and toxic environmental effects⁵.

“No evidence of risk” is not the same as “evidence of no risk”

International experts issued a warning to prevent human exposure to gentian violet in food due to cancer risk



which triggered the 2018 review by Health Canada as described in their announcement:

In 2014⁶, the *FAO/WHO Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA)* completed an assessment (toxicological evaluation) of certain veterinary drugs (including gentian violet) residues in food. They concluded that gentian violet can alter genetic material and cause cancer (genotoxic carcinogen). Therefore, an acceptable daily intake (ADI) cannot be established. Based on the JECFA's conclusion, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, which develops international food standards to protect consumer health and to facilitate fair trading practices in foods, recommended in 2018 that regulatory authorities prevent exposure to residues of gentian violet in food⁷. Following this recommendation, Health Canada decided to review the risk of cancer with the use of gentian violet-containing human health products, in addition to veterinary products.

¹“Health Canada warns Canadians of potential cancer risk associated with gentian violet,” Recalls and safety alerts, Health Canada, accessed August 4, 2019, <https://healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2019/70179a-eng.php>.

²“Surgical skin-marking techniques,” PubMed.gov, NCBI, accessed August 4, 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2434965>.

³“Gentian Violet,” Chemical Compound, PubChem, National Library of Medicine, accessed April 16, 2020, <https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/compound/Gentian-violet>.

⁴“Gentian Violet,” Chemicals Considered or Listed Under Proposition 65, OEHHA: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, accessed April 16, 2020, <https://oehha.ca.gov/proposition-65/chemicals/gentian-violet>.

⁵“Exposure to Crystal Violet, Its Toxic, Genotoxic and Carcinogenic Effects on Environment and Its Degradation and Detoxification for Environmental Safety,” PubMed.gov, NCBI, accessed August 4, 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26613989>.

⁶“Toxicological evaluation of certain veterinary drug residues in food / prepared by the seventy-eighth meeting of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA),” Institutional Repository for Information Sharing, World Health Organization, accessed August 5, 2019, <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/128550>.

Because this is the most common skin marking product on the market, there was an immediate inquiry as to the rationale behind this requirement, and if pens or toothpicks with a very small dose were still allowed for topical use, in consideration that the only medical devices were stated to pose little to no risk.

These products do not pose an increased risk of cancer when used for a short time and in most people. [ibid]

Health Canada has reassured us that skin markers made with gentian violet are allowed, but initially replied that containers of liquid were not and must be returned to the pharmacy for disposal. With the rational persistence of Jason Friday, Jesse Villemaire and colleagues, by June 22nd the reasonable topical use of liquid for our purposes of skin marking was clarified and accepted.

Dear Jason, in follow up to your recent telephone request.

The current recall of gentian violet non-prescription drugs and veterinary drugs does not impact compliant sales of medical devices containing gentian violet in Canada. Markers used in the tattoo and piercing industry are not subject to the Medical Devices Regulations or the Food and Drug Regulations. These items maybe medical devices used off-label, and the exposures may be higher depending on the individual circumstances. But are not expected to be toxic if not ingested. Business owners should discuss any potential risks with their clients.

Health Canada reviewed the potential for toxicity from gentian violet in medical devices and concluded that based on the limited exposure to Gentian Violet in wound dressings and surgical markers they are not associated with an increase in excess cancer risk.

The current summary safety reviews and information updates published by Health Canada document an unacceptable toxic response to the potential oral ingestion of gentian violet in human non-prescription drugs and veterinary drugs for feed and companion animals.

[Summary Safety Review](#)

[Information Update](#)

Please contact me directly if you have further questions or concerns.

Sincerely

Mary-Jane

Mary-Jane Bell, Ph.D.

Science Advisor, Medical Devices Bureau, Health Products and Food Branch

Health Canada | Government of Canada

Yes, we can continue to use gentian violet based sterile surgical markers and non-sterile skin markers because the limited exposure has a low probability of a dangerous dose. Mark the area prior to your final application of antiseptic, or use sterile gloves and a sterile marking implement after the final antiseptic has been applied and dried.

Some risk remains with liquid gentian violet

Please note that the use of liquid gentian violet in bottles has several disadvantages: intrinsic contamination⁸, extrinsic contamination of a multidose container from use and airborne exposure, added complexity of effective sterilization⁹, superpotency¹⁰, and the possibility that a harmful dose can be delivered by accident, or the inconvenience of an accidental spill.

“Surprisingly, no acute toxic side effects were reported after administration of large amounts of gentian violet-treated blood. ... Gentian violet is a mutagen, a mitotic poison, and a clastogen. The carcinogenic effects of gentian violet in rodents have been reported recently.”

Don't panic!

We should not be discouraged by the scrutiny of our gentian violet use, and may be pleased to explore alternatives where possible. Here are some options:

Some skin markers are made without gentian violet. Stick with skin markers and surgical markers, rather than permanent ink pens and markers at the incision site. Gentle, direct pressure with the jewelry or the back of the needle, can make clearly defined indentations to mark the location of the piercing for the client. These pressure marks are another option that does not require ink and can be

⁷“Codex Alimentarius Commission: 02-06 July 2018,” News, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed August 4, 2019, <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1143286/icode/>.

⁸Thomas J. Safranek, M.D., William R. Jarvis, M.D., Loretta A. Carson, Lucy B. Cusick, Lee A. Bland, Jana M. Swenson, and Vella A. Silcox, “Mycobacterium chelonae Wound Infections after Plastic Surgery Employing Contaminated Gentian Violet Skin-Marking Solution,” (July 23, 1987): accessed August 4, 2019, <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJM198707233170403>.

⁹“Precautions with gentian violet: Skin marking made sterile, effective, and economical,” Resources, Brian W. Skellie - Sharing Ideas, accessed August 4, 2019,

<https://brnskill.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Precautions-with-gentian-violet-skin-marking-made-sterile-effective-and-economical.pdf>.

¹⁰“FDA Recalls & Court Actions: Dec. 18 & 26, 1991,” News, Scrip > Informa Pharma Intelligence, accessed August 4, 2019, <https://scrip.pharmaintelligence.informa.com/PS020249/FDA-RECALLS-amp-COURT-ACTIONS-Dec-18-amp-26-1991>.

¹¹“The metabolism and mode of action of gentian violet,” PubMed.gov, NCBI, accessed August 4, 2019, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2272286>.

¹²“Marking for procedures,” (April 20, 2012), Shares, Brian W. Skellie - Sharing Ideas, accessed August 4, 2019, <https://brnskill.com/shares/markings-for-procedures/>.



Related science in regulation

Ongoing scientific review to assess the safety and effectiveness data gaps of health care antiseptics went into effect by the FDA on December 20, 2018¹³. In this case and with other antiseptics under review when a product has out of date or insufficient evidence for market, updated evidence can become a regulatory requirement. Now they want proof of no harm, or predictable minimal harm, which is different from “no proof of harm” shifting of responsibility. We can anticipate more interaction from regulatory authorities in regard to the antiseptic products we use as piercers and body artists.

I prefer to find an alternative if clinically significant or regulatory disadvantages apply to a product. There are quite a number of grey areas in our business practices and the products we use that deserve both scrutiny and further discussion into the ethical decision-making process. When it comes to regulatory requirements, it's a hard stop and switch to something else until we can prove safety through the required means. Some aspects of our work practices are more based on theoretical rationale than evidence. When it comes to products, there is a choice between evidence to prove safety and the theoretical rationale or regulatory limits, evidence first, limits imposed, then negotiated rationale.

*Sometimes it just takes an educational push to get rationale supported by evidence or at least move regulatory limits in the right direction for us. In this case, it was a success for our industry.

For another example, Statim autoclaves are sometimes confusing to regulatory authorities when they are presented as a separate category of sterilizer, even though they are proven substantially equivalent to other autoclaves plus a few features. When educational information is provided, their function and operation are as easy to understand as any other autoclave.

**Jewelry standards have had a similar level of analysis in terms of evidence requirements for material safety. Also, a similar level of misunderstanding that we are working on correcting through educational outreach.

made in seconds and repositioned accurately. This pressure can help acclimate the area to stimulation, and minimize the shock of the piercing to the client. As with other methods, you may either mark the area prior to your final application of antiseptic with a nonsterile implement or

Photo by Pat Tidwell



use sterile gloves and a sterile marking implement after the final antiseptic has been applied and dried¹².

Other products have been used with mixed results. Tattoo pigment have been reported to leave permanent stains in some cases when used for marking. Food coloring dye may not work for clients with related allergies.

¹³ “Safety and Effectiveness of Health Care Antiseptics; Topical Antimicrobial Drug Products for Over-the-Counter Human Use,” (December 20, 2017), A Rule by the Food and Drug Administration, Federal Register, accessed August 5, 2019, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/12/20/2017-27317/safety-and-effectiveness-of-health-care-antiseptics-topical-antimicrobial-drug-products-for>.

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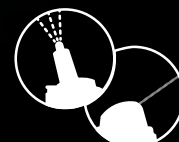
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