



Qiu Feng. Courtesy of Qiu Feng.

That was my first encounter with the injustices facing people living with HIV in China. Since my friend's experience, I have heard so many more stories from friends living with HIV about serious gaps in services and care. There is no real protection for the privacy of people living with HIV, leading many MSM to seek consultations in other cities or forgo treatment altogether. Employment discrimination has intensified in both the public and private sectors, with HIV tests now required when applying to be a civil servant, teacher, or an employee at many private businesses. People living with HIV are constantly turned away from hospitals, being told that there simply aren't enough beds or that there are no specialists to deal with their "condition." The fact that all of these things - privacy breaches, mandatory employee testing, refusal of medical treatment based on HIV status – are in direct violation of Chinese law doesn't seem to matter.



This issue of *Sense* focuses on access. The question of access is an important one for MSM living with HIV in China. From my perspective, if we had access to proper legal resources, we may be able to defend the

rights afforded to us by Chinese law and vastly improve our quality of life. This issue of *Sense* offers a wide range of stories about different kinds of access for MSM living with HIV in different countries, exploring ideas of access in relationships, communities, love and self, as well as the many unique obstacles we face.

Writing from Colombia, Juan Calderon addresses the need to overcome the stereotype that MSM living with HIV cannot find healthy relationships with other MSM, be they positive or negative. Matthew Thomann discusses the opportunities created by a strong sense of community among a group of MSM in West Africa. Carlos Rivas, a Venezuelan living in Toronto, examines the need for gay men to understand their sexuality as a means of positive communication and self-expression. These are stories that many of us can relate to. Like the other contributors to this magazine, I hope this second edition of *Sense* helps to start conversations about the state of access to healthcare, relationships, and community between MSM living with HIV, among our loved ones, and throughout our society at large.



