

AIDS drug trials may be virus stopper

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A U.S. pharmaceutical company is trying to get complete human data on a drug proven to prevent HIV in monkeys more than 12 years ago.

Gilead Sciences Inc., Foster City, Calif., has been selling tenofovir as an AIDS treatment drug but it hasn't been approved by the Food and Drug Administration for prevention.

FDA approval for preventative medicine is more stringent than treatments, putting more emphasis on side effects.

When it was discovered by University of Washington scientists in 1994, tenofovir was touted as a pill that may stop the AIDS epidemic, The Wall Street Journal reports.

Tenofovir is sold under the name Viread and as part of a "drug cocktail" of AIDS and HIV treatments called Truvada.

But tests in countries where AIDS rates are soaring and healthcare lacks have been shut down by politics. Critics claim the pill will encourage dangerous sexual behavior while governments have succumbed to the pressure and blocked trials.

Funded with grants and working with other U.S. researchers, Gilead plans testing the pill as a preventative medicine in Thailand, Botswana, Peru and other countries.

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