

AIDS death rate same despite new drugs

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A new U.S. study says despite improvements in drug therapy the death rate for AIDS patients in North America and Europe has shown no decline.

One reason researchers found is that in 2003 patients tended to be sicker when they started treatment compared to those in 1995, reports WebMD. They found a number of recent AIDS cases also showed a higher incidence of tuberculosis.

The researchers, whose findings will appear in the next issue of the British medical journal *The Lancet*, studied the impact since the introduction of the highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) 10 years ago.

The study also found that those starting therapy in 2003 were more likely than those in 1995 to be female and infected with HIV through heterosexual rather than homosexual contact.

"Twenty years ago AIDS was a disease of middle class, white, gay men, but it is increasingly a disease of poverty," said Dr. Carlos del Rio, co-director of Atlanta's Emory University Center for AIDS Research.

"Patients today are less likely to have access to good medical care, so it is not surprising that they are sicker when we first see them."

Nonetheless, the WebMD report said the new HAART regimens do far better in viral control with far fewer serious side effects than in the past.

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