

AIDS drugs reveal leprosy infections

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Experts in New York and around the world have said antiretroviral treatments have revealed hidden cases of leprosy in some AIDS patients.

Doctors have said AIDS patients in Brazil, India, Africa, the Caribbean and other locations have developed symptoms of leprosy after being treated with antiretroviral drugs, The New York Times reported Tuesday.

Experts have warned that the problem could become more widespread.

Dr. William Levis, who treats leprosy patients at Bellevue Hospital in New York, said: "It's early in the game. Most physicians don't even think about leprosy, so there's probably much more around than we know."

Dr. Gilla Kaplan, a professor at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey who has studied links between the two diseases agreed that further cases were likely to develop.

She said the antiretroviral treatment "is going to flush out the silent leprosy by making it symptomatic."

However, the experts said leprosy can be treated with specialized antibiotics, so there is little risk of widespread deaths or an epidemic. The concern, they say, is for the individual patients who have not been diagnosed.

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