

New AIDS drug shows 'phenomenal' results

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AIDS researchers said a new drug shows promise for inhibiting the HIV virus in patients new to treatment or those currently taking a drug cocktail.

Clinical studies of the drug, called an integrase inhibitor, showed that, when combined with two existing drugs, it reduced the virus to undetectable levels in nearly 100 percent of HIV patients prescribed a drug regimen for the first time, The Los Angeles Times said Tuesday. It had a similar effect in 72 percent of salvage therapy patients, who take a mixture of existing medications aimed at stalling the virus until new drugs appear.

The drug essentially prevents the virus' DNA from integrating with a host's cells, inhibiting its ability to replicate itself.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration should approve it in mid-2007. Manufacturer Merck & Co. is making it available sooner to patients in desperate straits.

"They tested it on some people who were in deep, deep salvage therapy, and even those people did remarkably well," Dr. Steven Deeks, a University of California, San Francisco salvage therapy authority, told the Times. "It seems to be a truly phenomenal drug that ... is changing the whole way we think about the management of these patients."

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