

Long-term AIDS treatment may cause illness

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AIDS-infected patients are living longer, only to discover they are prematurely susceptible to a host of aging-related illnesses.

Though research into the links between anti-retroviral drugs and premature aging is just beginning, anecdotally, many who have lived relatively healthily with AIDS for decades are experiencing heart disease, kidney failure, osteoporosis, cancer and depression, The New York Times reported Sunday.

The problem is likely to get worse in the future as the number of older people who have lived long-term with AIDS increases, the newspaper said. Between 2001 and 2005, the number of people over 50 living with HIV, the virus believed to cause AIDS, increased by almost 80 percent.

Experts are not certain but they suspect severe aging symptoms are caused by a combination of damage caused by years of AIDS before treatment was available, and drug side effects.

Several long-term studies are under way to test that theory, which may eventually help eliminate such complications, the Times reported.

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