

# Treatment for herpes in patients co-infected with herpes and HIV could delay HIV disease progression

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Most people who are infected with HIV-1 are dually infected with herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV2). New research shows that aciclovir, used to treat HSV2, could delay HIV-1 disease progression in patients co-infected with both conditions. The findings are published in an Article Online First and in an upcoming edition of *The Lancet*--written by Dr Jairam Lingappa, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA, and colleagues both across Africa and globally.

Daily suppression of this herpes virus reduces plasma HIV-1 concentrations, but whether it delays HIV-1 disease progression is unknown. In this study, the authors studied suppression of herpes simplex virus type 2 with aciclovir in African participants who were dually infected with HIV-1 and HSV2 to assess the efficacy of suppressive aciclovir on measures of HIV-1 disease progression.

The trial took place at 14 sites in southern and east Africa, and recruited 3381 heterosexual people who were dually infected with HSV2 and HIV-1. Patients were randomly assigned in a 1:1 ratio to aciclovir 400 mg orally twice daily or placebo, and were followed up for up to 24 months. Eligible participants had CD4 cell counts of 250 cells per  $\mu\text{L}$  or higher and were not taking antiretroviral therapy. Patients and investigators did not know who was receiving which treatment. Effect of aciclovir on HIV-1 disease progression was defined by a combined primary endpoint of first occurrence of CD4 cell count of fewer than

200 cells per  $\mu\text{L}$ , antiretroviral therapy initiation, or non-trauma-related death. The researchers also assessed the endpoint of CD4 count falling to

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