

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 μL 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 μL , antiretroviral therapy initiation, or non-trauma-related death. The researchers also assessed the endpoint of CD4 count falling to

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