

Frequent alcohol use linked to faster HIV disease progression

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HIV disease tends to progress at a faster rate in infected individuals who consume two or more alcoholic drinks a day, according to an important new paper in *AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses*.

The article, entitled "Alcohol Use Accelerates HIV Disease Progression," clearly demonstrates that frequent alcohol use, defined as two or more drinks daily, is associated with declining CD4+ cell counts (which indicate a weakened immune system) in individuals with HIV disease who either are or are not receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART). Based on the results of a 30-month prospective study, the authors, Marianna Baum, Carlin Rafie, Sabrina Sales, and Adriana Campa, from Florida International University (Miami), Shenghan Lai, from Johns Hopkins University, and John Bryan Page, from University of Miami, Florida, conclude that alcohol has a direct effect on [CD4 cells](#) and that the accelerated decline in CD4+ cell counts in frequent alcohol users is not simply due to poorer adherence to ART in this population.

Another article by Natascha Ching, Karin Nielsen-Saines, Jaime Deville, Lian Wei, Eileen Garratty, and Yvonne Bryson, from the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, demonstrated that children who were infected with HIV while in utero via maternal-fetal transmission, were subsequently given antiretroviral therapy, and had no detectable HIV in their blood, still produced neutralizing antibodies against HIV, suggesting that low levels of [viral replication](#) might still be occurring despite drug therapy. In the article "Autologous Neutralizing Antibody to Human Immunodeficiency Virus-1 and Replication-

Competent Virus Recovered from CD4+ T-Cell Reservoirs in Pediatric HIV-1—Infected Patients on HAART," the authors present data to support their conclusion that the children's CD4 T-cells may contain latent HIV reservoirs that formed early in life before antiretroviral therapy was initiated.

"It is important that [HIV](#) infected individuals make informed decisions relating to alcohol consumption. This article will help to achieve that goal," says Thomas Hope, PhD, Editor-in-Chief of *AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses* and Professor of Cell and Molecular Biology at the Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University, Chicago, IL.

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.

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