

Danish HIV patients can live as long as the general population when treated optimally

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Researchers who have been following Danish HIV patients for more than fifteen years now see that the patients may live as long as other Danes if they take their medicine.

"It is my impression that patients often ask themselves a range of questions: 'What are my long-term prospects? Will I be dead in five years' time? Will the disease cause brain damage? Will I have heart trouble'?" says Professor Niels Obel, the University of Copenhagen and Rigshospitalet. He continues:

"Fortunately we are well-equipped to answer such questions in [Denmark](#) because we record an exceptional amount of data which we can use to shed light on the long-term effects of disease. This also goes for Danish [HIV patients](#), and it is marvellous to be able to tell them that actually their prospects are quite bright."

Professor Nobel heads up the Danish Cohort Study that has provided the basis for the new results published in [PLoS ONE](#).

Via such thorough data collection, the Danish national health board provides researchers with a unique opportunity to follow particular groups of patients over an extended period. The Danish HIOV [cohort study](#) is following every HIV positive patient in Denmark and [Greenland](#), for example, including children and adults who have only been in contact with a treatment centre once since 1995.

Professor Obel and his colleagues publish an annual report on the condition of the HIV Cohort. The 2011 edition shows that far more men are still being infected by HIV than women (76 per cent to 24 per cent), that the most frequent path of infection is heterosexual contact (46 per cent) and homosexual contact (44 per cent), and that patients are not as ill on [diagnosis](#) (they have higher CD 4 cell counts).

"This is probably because newly infected patients visit their GPs sooner and are diagnosed earlier than they used to be," Professor Obel says.

HIV infections are chronic. Almost thirty years on since the first documented cases, we still do not have a vaccine or a cure, because HIV continually mutates and enters our DNA, where drugs cannot reach it.

So an HIV diagnosis means that patients will require treatment for the rest of their lives. However, the latest figures show that the life expectancy of optimally-treated patients is not adversely affected by taking the drugs or by the disease itself.

On 9 December, professor Niels Obel will deliver his inaugural lecture at Rigshospitalet. During the lecture he will describe the Danish HIV Cohort for a wider audience.

Professor Obel hopes that [HIV](#) patients and their relatives will also attend in order to hear the latest results.

Provided by University of Copenhagen

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