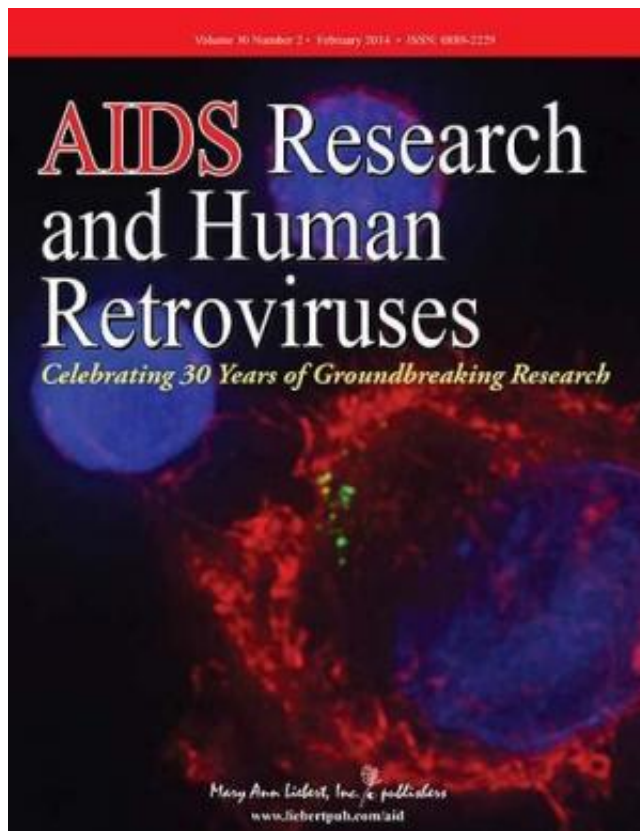


# Can marijuana protect the immune system against HIV and slow disease progression?

February 18 2014

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New evidence that chronic intake of THC, the primary psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, can protect critical immune tissue in the gut from the damaging effects of HIV infection is reported in *AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses*.

Patricia Molina and coauthors from Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, New Orleans, report that chronic THC administration was associated with greater survival of T cell populations and reduced overall cell death in the gut in monkeys, which is known to be a key target for simian immunodeficiency virus (HIV) replication and infection-related inflammation. The researchers present their findings in the article "[Modulation of Gut-Specific Mechanisms by Chronic Δ9-Tetrahydrocannabinol Administration in Male Rhesus Macaques Infected with Simian Immunodeficiency Virus: A Systems Biology Analysis](#)." This report provides mechanistic insights into their previous observation that THC administration attenuates [disease progression](#) in SIV infected macaques (*AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses* 2011; 27: 585-592)

"To better treat HIV infection, we need a better understanding of how it causes the disease we call AIDS. We also need alternative approaches to treatment," 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. "This study is important because it begins to explain how THC can influence disease progression in SIV-infected macaques. It also reveals a new way to slow disease progression."

**More information:** The article is available free on the *AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses* website at <http://www.liebertpub.com/aid>.

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Citation: Can marijuana protect the immune system against HIV and slow disease progression? (2014, February 18) retrieved 10 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-02-marijuana-immune-hiv-disease.html>

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