Cure: Transplant Attempt

Another man living with HIV attempts to stay off antiretrovirals after a bone marrow transplant to treat his leukemia.

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A 55-year-old man living with HIV stayed off antiretrovirals (ARVs) for nine months without a viral rebound following a bone marrow, or stem cell, transplant to treat his leukemia. In contrast to the Berlin Patient, who is the only person ever cured of HIV, this man did not receive his bone marrow from a donor with a genetic abnormality that confers resistance to HIV among immune cells. In 2013, he received reduced-intensity conditioning chemotherapy in addition to the transplant. Four months later, he developed graft-versus-host disease, a reaction to the transplant. Two years following the transplant, his medical team took him off ARVs and monitored him carefully. He spent nine months with an undetectable viral load before seeing his virus rebound, at which point he was put back on ARVs. Tests indicated that his viral reservoir, the existence of which frustrates attempts to cure the virus, had tapered in size.

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