18 Months of HIV Prophylaxis Is Safe and Effective for Breast-Feeding Mothers

This is according to extended follow-up of a trial that gave HIV-positive breast-feeding mothers treatment or prophylaxis for their infant.

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Providing HIV-positive breast-feeding mothers with either antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for the virus or Viramune (nevirapine) prophylaxis for the infant for up to 18 months is, after two years of follow-up, safe and effective at preventing transmission of the virus, Reuters Health reports. This is according to the first study to include such a lengthy follow-up period.

Publishing their findings in the Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes, researchers from the PROMISE trial recruited 2,431 breast-feeding mothers who were living with HIV and had a CD4 count of at least 350. They and their infants were enrolled six to 14 days after the child's birth at 14 sites in sub-Saharan Africa.

Each mother-and-child pair was randomly assigned to receive maternal antiretroviral therapy (mART) or infant nevirapine (Viramune) prophylaxis (iNVP), for up to 18 months.

Seven infants (less than 0.6 percent) from each group contracted HIV during the study. The proportion of infants who were living and did not have HIV at the end of 24 months of follow-up was 97.1 percent among those in the mART group and 97.7 percent in the iNVP group.

Women stopped breast feeding after a median 16 months in both groups. Women in each group had a similar rate of life-threatening or fatal adverse health events. Less than 1 percent of the mothers and 2 percent of the infants stopped treatment due to toxicity.

To read the Reuters Health article, click here (free registration with Medscape is required).

To read the study abstract, click here.

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