60% of HIVers Now Survive Lymphoma

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The incidence of non-Hodgkins lymphoma—a deadly cancer of the lymphocyte T and B cells that hits more than 4 percent of all HIVers—hasn't fallen in the HAART era. But now it appears that the HIV "cocktail hour" has poured a glass half full: HIVers now seem to be contracting lymphoma that is more drug-responsive than before HAART. The Center for Cancer Research at the National Cancer Institute has scored a 60 percent survival rate in positive patients with aggressive B-cell lymphomas after slightly more than four years. In the past, survival rates for HIV-related lymphoma reached only 20 to 40 percent after three years of cancer treatment (the rate varies by type of tumor). The lead study author, Wyndham Wilson, MD, reports, "There appears to have been a shift in the pathobiology of AIDS-related tumors, due to the improvement in immune function with HAART, [so that] the lymphomas are more sensitive to treatment and hence more curable." It helps that chemotherapy can now be dosed by continuous infusion over days rather than all in a few hours. So, Wilson adds, "AIDS lymphoma today should be considered highly curable with appropriate treatment." Cause for celebration.

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