HIV-Positive Smokers Lose Far More Years to Cigarettes Than to the Virus

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A large study has found that smokers with well-controlled HIV lose far more years of life expectancy to cigarettes than to the virus, MedPage Today reports. Publishing their findings in Clinical Infectious Diseases, a consortium of researchers from Copenhagen followed 2,921 Danish people with HIV (excluding injection drug users) and 10,642 HIV-negative controls between 1995 and 2010 for a total of 14,281 person-years for the HIV-positive group and 45,122 person-years for the other group. This allowed the researchers to estimate the health impact of smoking among people with HIV.

Danish people with HIV are provided free antiretroviral treatment at one of the country's eight specialized clinics, and few are lost to follow-up or suffer treatment failures. As a result, the cohort's HIV was well cared for.

The researchers found that HIV-positive smokers experienced a five-fold elevation in non-AIDS related deaths, with marked increases in cardiovascular disease and cancer. More than 60 percent of the deaths in the HIV study group were linked to smoking. On average, the HIV-negative control group lost 3.6 years of life to smoking when compared with nonsmokers. Those with HIV who never smoked lost 5.1 years of life compared with nonsmoking, HIV-negative controls. People with HIV who smoked lost 12.3 years of life compared with nonsmoking people with HIV.

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To read the study abstract, click here.

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