A New Way to Kill Viruses

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A new discovery called DRACO aims to KO viruses. DRACO works by making virus-infected cells self-destruct—without harming uninfected cells. If successful against HIV, it could deliver a life free of daily meds to people living with virus.

DRACO—short for double-stranded RNA (dsRNA) activated caspase oligomerizer—is still confined to researchers' test tubes, but developer Todd Rider, PhD, of MIT's Lincoln Laboratory, has high hopes. "DRACO has worked against every virus we've tested so far—15 in cells and two in mice," he says, "and it should work against HIV and hep C. They're on our list to test next."

"Although DRACO is several years away from use in humans," Rider adds, "it has the potential to revolutionize treatment and prevention of viral infections, just as antibiotics did against bacterial infections."

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