Ducking Resistance

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“Rutgers researchers may have stopped HIV,” AP headlines hyped last December.

HIV treatment pros didn’t jump at the news, because it’s only half true: Many new HIV meds have “unique” resistance profiles and can overcome the resistance HIV develops to older meds in their class—but they’re vulnerable to new HIV mutations. The Rutgers non-nuke innovation—DAPY, for di-aryl-pyrimidine derivatives—promises to “wiggle” around resistance: If HIV mutations prevent meds from blocking one point on a key enzyme, DAPYs can adapt, blocking others. A med that can do this would be wildly welcome, as even newly diagnosed HIVers learn to live with drug-resistant virus.

Treatment activists are guardedly hopeful. “TMC-125, the DAPY that’s reached Phase II trials, seems to be performing well in folks with non-nuke resistance,” says Tim Horn. “But we still don’t know” how they’ll fare over the longer run, he adds. To the wiggle room.

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