Geckos Don’t Cure AIDS

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Officials in the Philippines are fighting a growing trend of using geckos (small lizards) to treat AIDS. In folkloric practice, geckos are dried and pulverized to use as aphrodisiacs and medicines to heal a variety of illnesses, including AIDS. Now the gecko trade is exploding, with 11-ounce geckos selling for more than $1,000. Not unlike the Tanzanian tradition of hunting albino humans and harvesting blood and body parts for a black magic cure for AIDS, the dangerous practice of trying to cure AIDS with a lizard stems from lack of education and from desperation for a cure. Gecko traders have a flush market as people living with HIV who lack access to care and services and who face intense stigma and discrimination cling to any hope of a cure. Sadly, as misinformation and miseducation spread, so does HIV.

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