Heart Beat

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Another bump has arisen on the HAART road to PWA recovery. First there was the flood of reports of previously healthy protease-takers developing skyrocketing blood fats (triglycerides and cholesterol). Then came stories of heart attacks. Now there's research suggesting a possible mechanism by which protease inhibitors (PIs) might help cause those attacks. University of Wisconsin scientists recently found that in PWAs on PIs, the lining of the blood vessels (the endothelium) may not be functioning properly, thus heightening the risk of heart attack. Ultrasound mapping of blood flow through the brachial artery in the upper arms of 21 HIVers on PIs found significantly impaired responses to changing blood levels. While stressing that the findings are preliminary, the researchers are calling for closer heart-health monitoring of PI-takers, plus the possible use of blood fat–lowering agents to reduce cardiac risk.

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