No PEP Rally

Easy-access morning-after HIV meds? It can’t happen here!

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Weapons of mass protection have surfaced overseas! In June, the European Union issued guidelines for a 28-day HIV regimen that could be started within 72 hours of exposure. Stateside, however, the CDC continues to stall on promoting the meds, called non-occupational post-exposure prophylaxis (NOPEP). Though NOPEP has been approved and available for six years, the CDC has been struggling to issue physicians’ guidelines since 2001—and no release date is in sight. “This is the first time the CDC is issuing guidelines on PEP,” says the CDC’s Jessica Frickey. “Inherently, it’s going to take a long time.”

Though CDC guidelines require crippling bureaucratic review, NOPEP must also fight widespread fear that it encourages risky bedroom behavior. Recent studies in Brazil and San Francisco suggest otherwise. “There are enough data to support the development of ethical guidelines for NOPEP,” says Brenda Lein of Project Inform, a national HIV-advocacy organization. Meanwhile, states are making their own rules. But with Massachusetts calling it NPEP and the EU dubbing it NONOPEP, this much seems certain: In America, there’s still no PEP.

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