Spin Doctors

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The recent hype accompanying the release of two nonprotease antiretrovirals, abacavir (Ziagen) and efavirenz (Sustiva), is another reminder of the importance of independent information sources. As usual, pharmaceutical PR machines have spun the modest results of small, short-term clinical trials into claims of extreme drug potency. Indeed, when combined with older meds, abacavir and efavirenz are each said to constitute possible “protease-sparing regimens” (see “Fast Company” and “Selling Sustiva”). And again as usual, community-based AIDS treatment newsletters have, after carefully weighing the evidence, raised serious questions about the most extravagant and premature claims. So the lesson stands: When making important treatment decisions, don’t rely on glossy smiling-consumer drug ads, short news articles or even the facts offered by an overworked doctor. Dip into the library of national AIDS periodicals (see "Best of the Rest"), and check out some of the most in-depth and trustworthy information available anywhere.

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