Sugar on Top

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It’s an irony certain to turn your humor a darker shade of black: The oft-heard AIDS description—“may become a manageable disease…” may itself soon read not “…like diabetes” but “…including diabetes.” Glucose intolerance—the reduced ability of cells to properly use glucose for energy, and a potential first step on the road to diabetes—has been shown in multiple studies to occur in from 23 percent to 62 percent of those on HAART. So far, the comparatively low incidence among HAART-takers of full-blown diabetes—consistently too-high blood sugar after the body fails to properly handle glucose—has deflected attention from this alarming stat. But that may be a mistake, according to Michael Dube, MD, associate professor of medicine at the University of Southern California. Comparing the diabetes scare to AIDS docs’ concern about abnormally high blood fats in PWAs, he says: “It’s widely agreed that you shouldn’t wait to worry about elevated cholesterol until it has already resulted in heart disease. Similarly, the level of glucose intolerance seen now is extremely likely to mean a much higher incidence of diabetes—and the heart disease that is a common complication of it—down the line.” Experts advise measuring glucose levels as part of quarterly lab work, to flag potential problems. Talk about diabetic shock.

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