Topic of Cancer

September 1, 1999 By Lark Lands, PhD

Living with HIV certainly beats the alternative, but long-term survival with compromised immunity may be a costly proposition. Now you can add a new risk: cancer. Australian researcher Andrew Grulich reported that of 3,616 PWAs in New South Wales, Australia, studied from 1980 to 1993, almost one in four developed some form of cancer. In addition to cases of Kaposi's sarcoma and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, the two most common AIDS-related cancers, there was an alarmingly high number of such unusual varieties as aggressive skin and lip cancers, as well as Hodgkin's disease. And Grulich fears that these rates are rising. His explanation is that antiretroviral drugs "improve immune systems up to the point where people no longer die quickly from infections, but the immune system is not fully returned to normal, leaving people more prone to cancer as they live longer." Docs should look out for symptoms that might indicate such problems, and HIVers should schedule regular skin screenings with an HIV-savvy dermatologist.

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