Volunteers Wanted

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HIV positives needed to test a drug that could destroy your hips, thin your bones, mess up your toenails, keep your penis limp (men) and run riot with your red blood cells (women). Warning: HAART-takers need not apply. Why? You're already enrolled. Lest you thought lipodystrophy was the worst curse of the protease age, here are five new studies that hint at more freaky side effects.

Results from a study of 260 HIV positive Spaniards on protease inhibitors (PIs) showed that 14 (5 percent) were unable to achieve or maintain an erection and had decreased sex drive and/or problems ejaculating, despite normal testosterone levels and no other apparent impotence-causing factors. In a Danish study, four of 10 women with normal menstrual function pre-HAART developed anemia associated with heavy bleeding when given ritonavir (Norvir); in three, the problems resolved when a different PI was substituted. Researchers in Argentina report major loss of bone mineral density—today's thinning bones may be tomorrow's osteoporosis—in 17 HAART-taking men. Georgetown University scientists have found avascular necrosis—the death of hip tissue—in eight patients on PIs, a small percentage but a big jump compared to the pre-HAART era. And confirming what the community has long suspected, a French study shows that Crixivan (indinavir)—alone of the PIs and NNRTIs—is strongly associated with ingrown toenails.

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