Among Older Men, HIV Is Linked to Higher Dementia Risk

A recent study of veterans found that antiretroviral treatment was not associated with a mitigated dementia risk.

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HIV is associated with an increased risk for dementia among older men, aidsmap reports.

Kirsten Bobrow, DPhil, of the University of California, San Francisco, and her colleagues analyzed data on 2,228 veterans from the U.S. Veterans Health Administration System, covering 2005 to 2015. They published their findings in the journal AIDS.

The study included data on 1,114 veterans living with HIV, all of whom were 55 or older. They were matched with 1,114 HIV-negative vets according to age, sex, race and substance use (including tobacco use or unhealthy use of drugs or alcohol).

When they entered the study, the cohort members were 63 years old on average. Ninety-eight percent were men, 52% were white and 38% were Black.

Twenty-two percent of the cohort members had a history of smoking, and 18% had been diagnosed with a substance use disorder, whether due to drug or alcohol use. Seventeen percent had diabetes, 34% had high blood pressure and 7% had a history of stroke or mini-stroke.

Upon entering the cohort, the people with HIV had a higher rate of depression than their HIV-negative counterparts. The HIV-positive group had a higher overall educational level but tended to make less money than the HIV-negative group.

During an average of five years and a maximum of 11 years of follow-up, 57 (5.1%) of the HIV-positive study members were diagnosed with dementia, as were 33 (3.0%) of the HIV-negative individuals.

After adjusting the data to account for differences in age, sex, race, substance use, education and income, the investigators found that the HIV-positive cohort members were 50% more likely to be diagnosed with dementia during the study's follow-up than the HIV-negative individuals.

This meant that a projected 20% of the veterans with HIV would be diagnosed with dementia by

age 70, whereas among the HIV-negative men, it would take until they were 76 for one fifth of them to be diagnosed with dementia.

The investigators found that being treated with antiretrovirals was not associated with any change in the risk for dementia, nor were any specific HIV medications linked to any such difference in risk.

“It is critical to understand the mechanisms by which HIV increases risk for developing dementia in later life,” the study authors concluded.

To read the aidsmap article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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