Danish Women With HIV Have High Rates of Cervical Disease

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HIV-positive women are more likely than HIV-negative women to develop pre-cancerous cell changes in their cervix, known as cervical dysplasia, aidsmap reports. Publishing their findings in HIV Medicine, Danish researchers conducted a study of all 1,140 women receiving HIV care in Denmark between 1999 and 2010 and compared them with 15 age-matched controls each, for a total control group of 17,046 women.

The study excluded women with a history of cervical cancer or who had had a hysterectomy.

Between them, the HIV-positive women contributed a total of 9,491 person-years to the study (person-years are the cumulative years participants spend in a study), and the HIV-negative women contributed 156,865 person-years.

There are three stages of pre-cancerous cell changes in the cervix, known as the cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia (CIN) stages: CIN1+, CIN2+ and CIN3+.

Four (0.4 percent) of the HIV-positive women developed cervical cancer during the study, as did 28 (0.2 percent) of the controls. This difference was not statistically significant, meaning it could have occurred by chance.

At the outset of the study, 74 percent of the women with HIV and 65 percent of the control group had a normal test result in the screen for precancerous cervical cell changes. Compared with the HIV-negative women, the HIV-positive women had a 2.48-fold greater rate of CIN1+, a 2.4-fold greater rate of CIN2+, and an equivalent rate of the third stage.

Looking just at the women who had normal test results at the study's outset and who properly observed the Danish national cervical screening program guidelines, the researchers found that the incidence of CIN1+ and CIN3+ were elevated among the HIV-positive women. However, this difference was not statistically significant.

To read the aidsmap article, click here.

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