HIV Therapy May Protect Heart Function in Children and Teens

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Antiretroviral (ARV) therapy among HIV-positive children and teens appears unassociated with impaired heart function, and it may in fact protect against heart disease, MedPage Today reports. Publishing their findings in JAMA Pediatrics (from the Journal of the American Medical Association), researchers compared echocardiographic measures from two cohorts of children and teens drawn from the early 1990s to measures taken from young people in the late 2000s.

Before the modern ARV period, which began in the mid-1990s, children with HIV were more likely to experience abnormalities in left ventricular structure and function, which was associated with mortality.

The study included 325 perinatally infected children and 189 children who had been exposed to HIV but were still HIV-negative; 89 percent of this group was taking ARVs. These participants were drawn from 14 pediatric HIV clinics in the United States that were participating in the Pediatric HIV/AIDS Cohort Study's Adolescent Master Protocol, conducted between 2007 and 2009. The study also included 70 HIV-positive pediatric controls, 17 percent of whom were taking ARVs, from the Pediatric Pulmonary and Cardiovascular Complications of Vertically Transmitted HIV Infection (P2C2-HIV) Study, conducted between 1990 and 1997.

Scores of cardiac functioning in the left ventricle were significantly lower among the children from the older P2C2-HIV study as compared with either of the other two more recent groups. Some of those in the control group developed heart disease, while none of those from the more recent period did.

The study also found that a lower nadir CD4 percentage as well as a higher current viral load were associated with lower heart health indicators.

To read the MedPage Today study, click here.

To read a release on the study, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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