Concerns: Wasting Syndrome

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The loss of fat and lean body mass known as wasting syndrome is still a problem, affecting nearly one in five people living with HIV. Severe wasting was a hallmark of the early AIDS epidemic, attributable to HIV-related metabolic changes and opportunistic illnesses (OIs). What's more, some early antiretrovirals caused lipoatrophy, or peripheral fat loss. Researchers culled through national medical and pharmacy claims data from 2012 through 2018 for codes related to HIV, antiretroviral therapy, weight loss and appetite stimulation. They found that 18% of charts showed evidence of HIV--associated wasting, which did not differ significantly between people taking HIV meds and those who were not (the study didn't report which antiretrovirals people were using). However, the likelihood of wasting was higher among people who received care through Medicaid (24%) compared with private insurance or Medicare (8%). People with OIs, women, Black people and older people were more likely to develop wasting syndrome.

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