Cure: CRISPR Snips HIV

Trials for HIV-positive people of a treatment using the CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing tool may be on the horizon.

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Researchers have succeeded in using a CRISPR-based gene-editing technique to edit an HIV-like virus out of monkey cells. HIV and its simian cousin, SIV, integrate themselves into the genetic material of host immune cells and establish a long-lasting viral reservoir, making them extremely difficult to eradicate. The scientists designed an SIV-specific CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing tool meant to snip viral genes out of infected cells. It was packaged into a carrier virus to transport it to these cells. After three macaque monkeys with SIV received a single infusion of the treatment, it was distributed to a broad range of cells and tissues, including the viral reservoir of latently infected CD4 cells, where it effectively cleaved SIV from those cells. The researchers did not indicate that they had cured the animals, but their findings could represent an advance in the HIV cure field. They hope they will soon be able to advance the treatment, dubbed AAV9-CRISPR-Cas9, into clinical trials of people living with HIV.

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