



Cure: Elite Control

A woman in Spain may have been functionally cured of HIV without antiretroviral treatment.

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A woman in Spain may have been functionally cured of HIV without antiretroviral treatment. Left untreated, HIV almost always causes progressive disease, but scientists have described some cases of elite control, in which people maintain an undetectable viral load and remain healthy without antiretrovirals, and even a few cases of exceptional elite control, in which people seem to have naturally eliminated the virus. The 48-year-old Indian woman in Spain was first diagnosed with HIV in 2002. Despite not receiving antiretrovirals, she maintained an undetectable viral load and a stable CD4 cell count for 22 years, and she never developed clinical manifestations of HIV. Intact HIV DNA was not detected in resting T cells that make up the viral reservoir. She had well-preserved T-cell function, with low expression of markers of cell exhaustion, apoptosis and senescence, as well as active natural killer cells. She also had low levels of inflammatory biomarkers. “Functional cure is an uncommon but feasible outcome of HIV-1 infection,” the study authors concluded.

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