Cure: HIV Cure Trials

According to a survey, many people with HIV don’t understand how cure trials work.

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People with HIV often express interest in clinical trials aimed at curing the virus, but many have misconceptions about how this research works. These studies may ask participants to stop taking antiretrovirals temporarily while undergoing close monitoring—known as an analytical treatment interruption—to see how well an experimental therapy controls HIV. Viral load usually rises sooner or later, and treatment is then restarted. The researchers surveyed 442 HIV-positive people, mostly gay men, about participation in cure research. The respondents preferred monthly CD4, viral load and clinical monitoring during a treatment interruption, but in practice, such monitoring is done weekly. About a third said they would prefer to maintain an undetectable viral load at all times, while 27% would accept an increase up to 1,000 copies. Clinicians, too, had mixed feelings. But both groups expressed that they were very concerned about HIV transmission occurring during a treatment interruption, which has been documented in rare cases.

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