Cure: Protein Power

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Scientists have manufactured a two-headed protein that awakens latently HIV-infected immune cells and then summons an immune response to kill them—at least in laboratory research. This protein could become part of a therapy to cure HIV-positive individuals of the virus.The study's investigators drew latently infected CD4 cells from people undergoing standard antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for HIV, incubated those cells in the laboratory with the individuals' own CD8 cells, also known as killer T-cells, and then set loose the two-headed protein. Separately, they adapted the protein, called VRC07-DCD3, for primates and gave it to monkeys infected with SIV—HIV's simian cousin—that were taking ARVs. Researchers found that the protein treatment proved safe and well-tolerated in the primates, and they are now testing how well it works as an actual curative therapy in animals.

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