Cure: Research Ethics

Findings provide reassurance on ethics of cure studies.

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People participating in HIV cure studies who stop antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for a period during which they are closely monitored do not experience drug resistance, permanent damage to their immune function or a sustained increase in the size of their viral reservoir. This is according to a substudy of 10 people with HIV who were taken off ARVs for a stretch of time during a clinical trial evaluating whether infusions of an antibody could control the virus for an extended span in the absence of daily ARVs. Such a finding provides important reassurance for the ethics of enrolling participants in similar cure studies. To develop treatments that would allow people with HIV to go off ARVs without a viral rebound for sustained periods, researchers must currently put participants through these interruptions of their HIV medications. This allows scientists to observe how the virus behaves when not suppressed by ARVs.

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