With Proper Care, People With HIV May Erase Raised Heart Attack Risk

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The higher risk of heart attack among people living with HIV may be greatly reduced and even eliminated through HIV treatment and proper attention to traditional CVD risk factors. Publishing their findings in Clinical Infectious Diseases, researchers at Kaiser Permanente (KP) in California studied patient data to compare how the relative risk of CVD among HIV-positive people (when compared with HIV-negative people) changed between 1996 and the period of 2010 to 2011.

The study population included 24,768 HIV-positive patients and 257,600 HIV-negative matched controls, who between them contributed a respective 119,587 person-years and 1,506,676 person-years of follow-up.

There were 320 heart attacks among the HIV-positive individuals, for a rate of 268 cases per 100,000 person-years, and 2,483 heart attacks among the HIV-negative individuals, for a rate of 165 cases per 100,000 person-years.

After adjusting for various factors, the researchers found that, in 1996, people with HIV had an 80 percent increased risk of heart attack when compared with those not living with the virus. By the 2010 to 2011 period, this increased risk had been wiped out: Both groups had the same risk of heart attack.

"[E]arly and sustained improvements in care would have been necessary to achieve not only a reduction in risk of heart attack but a virtual leveling of risk between HIV-positive and HIV-negative individuals," senior author Michael J. Silverberg, PhD, MPH, a senior research scientist with the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research, said in a press release. "The takeaway from this study is that the well-established higher risk of a heart attack in HIV patients may be reversible. With better HIV treatments, and more attention to traditional cardiovascular risk factors, the difference in risk by HIV status has been diminished or even eliminated."

To read the study abstract, click here.

To read the press release, click here.