Even Very Early HIV Treatment May Not Reverse Damage to the Gut

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HIV launches an immediate assault on the gut after infection, spurring inflammation and causing other damage that even very early antiretroviral (ARV) treatment may not fully reverse, aidsmap reports. Researchers in the SEARCH (RV254) study followed 78 individuals who were diagnosed with the virus during acute infection and then started on ARVs within five days, as well as 109 age-matched controls. They presented their findings at the 2015 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in Seattle.

The researchers measured various biomarkers indicating: damage to the gut that permits leakage of intestinal bacteria; inflammation; blood clotting; and fibrosis. They took these measurements at the beginning of individuals' entry into the study and then at weeks 2, 12, 24, 36, 48 and 96.

At the outset, the biomarker levels were higher in all of the HIV-positive participants, regardless of how early in the course of acute infection they were diagnosed, when compared with the control group. Even through weeks 48 and 96 the levels remained higher in the HIV-positive group.

On the upside, the researchers found that the HIV-positive participants' biomarkers did drop to levels lower than those seen in people who start treatment past the acute period of infection.

To read the aidsmap story, click here.

To read the conference abstract, click here.

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