No More Excess Heart Attack Risk?

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People with HIV have a raised risk of heart attack, but they may greatly reduce or even wipe out this increased risk through antiretroviral (ARV) treatment and proper attention to other risk factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD). Researchers at Kaiser Permanente in California studied data on about 25,000 HIV-positive patients to compare their risk of CVD with a matched control group of just over 250,000 HIV-negative patients, and to see how the comparative risk between the two groups changed between 1996 and the beginning of the 2010s.

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

The study's lead author, Daniel B. Klein, MD, chief of infectious diseases for Kaiser Permanente San Leandro Medical Center, says that worries that HIV will lead to a heart attack "are no longer warranted if someone pays attention to his or her lifestyle and is on good treatment." He adds, "One of the key points is that conventional risk reduction for heart disease—smoking cessation, cholesterol management, blood pressure management—are keys to the declining rate that we observed."

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