Experts Recommend Heart Disease Screening in HIV

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A group of experts on HIV and heart disease recommends that people with HIV should take cardiovascular disease risk factors—such as cholesterol, diabetes and obesity—seriously due to a heightened risk for heart attacks. The group, convened by the American Heart Association and the American Academy of HIV Medicine, is publishing the proceedings of their meeting in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association* and the *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, according to Medical News Today.

The group, cochaired by Harvard Medical School's Steven Grinspoon, MD, reviewed all existing studies on cardiovascular disease and HIV and shared their clinical experience. The outcome of the meeting was a consensus among the experts that heart attack risk factors are a reason for concern in people with HIV. This is because the risk of a heart attack is approximately 70 to 80 percent higher for HIV-positive than for HIV-negative patients.

Both HIV and its treatments can exacerbate several cardiovascular disease risk factors, for instance, by reducing blood levels of HDL, the "good cholesterol," and by elevating triglyceride levels. "There are studies now that suggest that even young children with HIV on these medicines have early development of cardiovascular risk factors," says Grinspoon.

Grinspoon says studies are still underway to further clarify to what degree the virus and antiretroviral drugs contribute to cardiovascular disease.

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