HIV Is Linked With Impaired Respiratory Health

This remains the case even when HIV is well treated with antiretrovirals.

June 6, 2017

People living with HIV have a higher risk of impaired respiratory health, even when they are on antiretrovirals (ARVs) and have a fully suppressed viral load.

Publishing their findings in HIV Medicine, researchers conducted a study of 197 people with HIV and 93 people without the virus attending HIV and sexual health outpatient clinics in London in 2015.

The researchers assessed the participants' respiratory health with the St. George's Respiratory Questionnaire (SGRQ), their level of breathlessness with the Medical Research Council (MRC) questionnaire on the condition, and their lung function with a spirometry test.

The HIV-positive participants had worse respiratory health. Their median SGRQ total score was 12, compared with 6 among the HIV-negative individuals. Forty-seven percent of HIV-positive participants and 24 percent of HIV-negative participants had an MRC breathless score of 2 or above. A respective 11 percent and 9 percent had airflow obstruction.

After adjusting the data for age, gender, smoking, body mass index and depression, the investigators found that living with HIV was associated with higher SGRQ and MRC scores, including a 2.45-fold increased risk of having an MRC score of at least 2 and a 1.54-fold increased SGRQ score. These findings were similar when those people with HIV who did not have an undetectable viral load were excluded from the analysis.

The researchers concluded: "Despite effective [ARV treatment], impaired respiratory health appears more common in HIV-positive adults, and has a significant impact on health-related quality of life."

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