HIV Specific Poison May Complement Antiretrovirals

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A study conducted in mice has shown that a toxin engineered to target HIV can eliminate infected immune cells in which the virus is replicating despite antiretroviral (ARV) therapy.

Describing his research as a “proof of concept,” Edward A. Berger, PhD, a senior investigator in the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Laboratory of Viral Diseases, says his team considers the toxin as a potential complement to standard HIV treatment. “What [ARV therapy] does so effectively is to block replication of the virus, but it doesn’t kill cells that are already infected,” he says. “Whereas the immunotoxin’s only activity is to kill cells that are already infected. So, conceptually, it makes for a good combination, as opposed to adding just another replication inhibitor onto existing antiretroviral therapy.”

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