



Improving Cognition in People With HIV?

New drugs may slow biological aging for those living with the virus.

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Semaglutide and related weight-loss medications may help reduce inflammation, improve cognitive function and gut health, reduce alcohol use and even slow biological aging in people living with HIV, according to studies presented at this year's Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections.

Weight gain and metabolic abnormalities are a growing concern for people with HIV as they age, raising the risk for cardiovascular disease, fatty liver disease and other health problems.

Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists, such as semaglutide (Ozempic or Wegovy), mimic a natural hormone that suppresses appetite, regulates insulin and blood sugar and slows emptying of the stomach. Originally developed to treat type 2 diabetes, these drugs are now widely used to manage obesity. They have been shown to reduce the risk of heart and kidney disease and some types of cancer, and ongoing research continues to show additional and sometimes unexpected benefits.

"While we know some of the types of benefits [related to] metabolic health, this new data points to potential aging benefits. It suggests that GLP-1 agonists may be helpful in stabilizing biological aging in a subset of people living with HIV," investigator Michael Corley, PhD, of the University of California San Diego, said at the conference.

Case Western Reserve University researchers investigated the effect of semaglutide on neurocognitive function, asking whether changes in fat or inflammatory markers could explain the drug's benefits.

"Semaglutide has shown a potential beneficial impact on cognitive function, specifically the visuospatial cognitive subdomain in people living with HIV," the researchers concluded. "This

effect appears to be mediated by the effect of the drug on attenuating inflammation and not on adiposity [excess body fat].”

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