Kombucha Tea to...Gila Monster Spit?

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In the early days of AIDS, my friends and I searched desperately for treatments. We tried some pretty weird stuff, like Japanese kombucha mushroom tea. Then HIV meds appeared (and worked), and I grew accustomed to taking more traditional treatments in pills and shots.

But now, 26 years into life with HIV/AIDS, I have a slew of other conditions—including, most recently, diabetes. My damaged liver rules out various oral diabetes meds, so I inject a new drug, Byetta (exenatide). Doing background reading, I was transported back to those early days of HIV treatments with odd names and origins: Byetta is a synthetic form of the saliva of the venomous Gila monster—a protein in the lizard's spit helps control blood sugar. Though recent FDA reports alarmingly link Byetta to cases of pancreatitis, it seems to work for me. Gotta love that lizard.

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