Cure: “Kick and Kill”

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The National Institutes of Health’s Division of AIDS and Infectious Disease Services has pledged $6.6 million to support the first human clinical trial into an HIV cure strategy known as “kick and kill.” This Phase IIa research will explore a one-two punch approach to attacking the viral reservoir. First, researchers will attempt to make latently infected cells more visible to the immune system by “kicking” them out of their dormant state with a latency-reversing drug (in this case, what’s known as an HDAC inhibitor). They will also use an individual’s own virus to craft a virus-fighting therapy, which the Durham, North Carolina, biotech company Argos Therapeutics calls AGS-004. Ideally, this will make the body better able to respond to the newly replicating HIV-infected cells and eradicate the virus—which is where the “kill” part comes in.

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