Lag Time From First Visit to First HIV Treatment Drops Dramatically

The rapid treatment era is bringing some real rewards for people living with HIV.

February 22, 2021 By Heather Boerner

Between 2005 and 2018, the lag time between diagnosis of HIV and prescription of antiretroviral treatment fell from 69 days to six days—more than a 90% improvement—according to a recent report in Clinical Infectious Diseases.

This is especially important because rapid treatment has been found to improve outcomes all along the HIV care and prevention continuum, including halting disease progression and preventing onward transmission of HIV. Plus, data indicate that the sooner one is diagnosed with HIV and treated, the smaller their HIV reservoir—the hidden pool of latent virus that makes HIV so difficult to cure.

Jennifer Lee, PhD, of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and colleagues looked at changes in time to treatment among participants in NA-ACCORD, which tracked the outcomes of 20 cohorts of people entering HIV care for the first time in the United States and Canada. Altogether, the study included more than 32,000 adults.

The researchers saw a 91% reduction in the time from diagnosis to starting treatment. In addition, the median CD4 count at the time of entry into care rose from 300 in 2005 to 362 in 2018. Even more important, the median CD4 count at the time of the first antiretroviral prescription rose from 160 to 364 over the same period, indicating that people with HIV are now receiving treatment sooner, before the virus causes extensive damage to their immune system.

Click here to read the study abstract.

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