Living With HIV, Taking Treatment Linked to Increased Knee Arthritis Risk

This is according to a small study, so more research is needed.

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People with HIV who are on antiretroviral (ARV) treatment have a higher risk of knee cartilage damage, a hallmark of osteoarthritis, aidsmap reports.

Publishing their findings in BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders, researchers conducted a study of 10 people with HIV who had been on ARVs for at least 12 months plus 20 HIV-negative controls who were closely matched for age, sex, race and body mass index (BMI). About one in three participants were women. The average age was 52 years old.

Upon their entry into the study and throughout the eight-year follow-up period, the participants had their cartilage health and knee structure assessed with a battery of tests. This included MRI images as well as measurements of the structure, composition and texture of their cartilage.

At the study's outset, the HIV-positive participants, compared with the controls, had a higher rate of various indicators of damage to the cartilage, including abnormalities in their fat pads and a higher accumulation of fluid around the knee, which is indicative of an inflammatory state. Curiously, the people with HIV were less likely than the controls to have a certain form of bone cyst linked to osteoarthritis.

During the study's follow-up period, the HIV-positive individuals experienced a greater decline in markers of the texture and composition of their cartilage and also suffered more severe buildup of fluid in the knee. These shifts, the researchers noted, were signs of irreversible osteoarthritis in the knee.

Calling for more research, the study authors speculated that both HIV and ARVs might have driven these differences between the study groups.

To read the aidsmap article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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