Four- and Eight-Week HIV Treatments Show Promise

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Long-acting injections of a dual-combination antiretroviral (ARV) treatment, given every four or eight weeks, suppressed HIV as well as a standard oral regimen, HIVandHepatitis.com reports. Publishing their findings in The Lancet, researchers in the Phase IIb LATTE 2 trial studied long-acting injectable formulations of ViiV Healthcare's experimental integrase inhibitor cabotegravir and Janssen's non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NNRTI, or non-nuke) Edurant (rilpivirine) among 309 treatment-naive participants.

The participants began the trial by taking an oral ARV regimen consisting of 30 mg of cabotegravir and two nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTIs, or nukes). Once the participants had a fully suppressed viral load, they were randomly assigned to either stay on the same regimen or to receive the long-acting medications every four or eight weeks.

Thirty-two weeks after the randomization, a respective 94 percent and 95 percent of those receiving the four- and eight-week injections had a fully suppressed viral load, compared with 91 percent taking oral ARVs. One person in the eight-week arm and one person in the oral ARVs arm developed virologic failure; neither had evidence of drug resistance.

The researchers will follow the participants through 96 weeks of treatment. ViiV and Janssen are currently planning a Phase III trial of the injectable regimen, which is also being studied as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Animal studies have shown that monthly cabotegravir injections protected macaque monkeys against vaginal or rectal exposures of SIV, HIV's simian cousin.

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