People With HIV Are Diagnosed With COPD at a Much Younger Age

Higher rates of smoking among people with HIV compared with those who don't have the virus may be the main reason.

March 4, 2020 By Benjamin Ryan

Compared with those who do not have the virus, people living with HIV are diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a serious lung condition, at much younger ages and at a higher annual rate.

Researchers at St. Michael's Hospital of Unity Health Toronto and the nonprofit research institute ICES, also in Toronto, analyzed data on 1,849 people with HIV and 1.17 million HIV-negative people who were newly diagnosed with COPD between 1996 and 2015 in Ontario. The province is home to 40% of the Canadian HIV population.

Publishing their findings in CMAJ Open, the investigators found that people with HIV were diagnosed with COPD at a median age of 50, 12 years younger than the median age at diagnosis of 62 among those without the virus.

After adjusting the data to account for various differences between the cohort members, the study authors found that the annual COPD diagnosis rate was 34% higher among people with HIV compared with HIV-negative individuals. Specifically, for every 1,000 cumulative years of follow-up, 10.4 people with the virus and 9.0 people without the virus were diagnosed with the lung disease.

Among women, the COPD diagnosis rate was 54% higher among those living with HIV compared with those who did not have the virus. Among men, the diagnosis rate was 32% higher in the HIV population.

"As people with HIV live longer, it is important to understand how common other illnesses are to ensure that prevention, screening and treatment strategies can be developed," Tony Antoniou, PhD, a scientist at the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute of St. Michael's, said in a press release.

"We wanted to understand how common COPD is in Ontario residents with HIV because COPD is a disease that generally worsens with time, can worsen a person's quality of life and is strongly linked to smoking."

To that point, Antoniou and his colleagues found that higher rates of smoking among people with HIV apparently explained the higher risk of COPD among them.

“While other factors may contribute to the development of COPD in people with HIV, our work highlights the importance of trying to help our patients with HIV quit smoking to prevent COPD in the first place and prevent further lung damage in people who are already diagnosed with COPD,” said Antoniou.

To read a press release about the study, click here.

To read the study, click here. http://cmajopen.ca/content/8/1/E83.full

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