People on HIV Treatment Gain Weight Faster Than Those Without HIV

This finding held true regardless of individuals' initial weight, unless they had obesity, in a recent large study.

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HIV-positive individuals taking antiretrovirals (ARVs) gain weight at a swifter pace than HIV-negative individuals of a similar age, aidsmap reports. This finding held true regardless of the individuals' initial weight, unless they started off with obesity, in a recent large analysis.

Michael Silverberg, PhD, MPH, of Kaiser Permanente Northern California, presented findings from a comparison of weight-gain trends among people on HIV treatment versus HIV-negative individuals at the International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2020), which was held virtually earlier this month.

Silverberg and his colleagues assembled a cohort of 8,256 people with HIV taking ARVs who received health care from Kaiser Permanente in California, Virginia, Maryland and Washington, DC. They matched those individuals with HIV-negative Kaiser members in those states according to age, sex, race, clinic and year, for a cohort of 129,966 people without the virus.

The HIV-positive group had a median age of 41. Eighty-eight percent were men, 36% were white, 26% were Black, 26% were Latino and 6% were Asian or Pacific Islander. Eleven percent had an alcohol use disorder, and 16% had a substance use disorder at the beginning of the study's follow-up period.

At the outset, 3% of those with HIV and 1% of those without had a body mass index (BMI) below 18.5, indicating they were underweight. A respective 44% and 24% of those with and without HIV had a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9, indicating a normal weight; 35% and 38% had a BMI of 25 to 29.9, meaning they were overweight; and 37% and 18% had a BMI of 30 or higher, meaning they had obesity. The average BMI was 25.8 among those with HIV compared with 28.7 among those without the virus.

During the study's follow-up, weight was assessed a median of eight times among those with HIV and five times among those without the virus.

Over 12 years of follow-up, the people with HIV gained an average of 0.5 pounds per year, compared with 0.2 pounds among HIV-negative individuals. At the end of this period, the

respective average BMI in these two groups was 28.4 and 29.4.

People with HIV gained weight at a faster pace than those without the virus in all the baseline weight categories, with the exception of those who started the study with obesity.

As Silverberg stated during his virtual conference presentation, the more rapid weight gain among people with HIV is concerning because it will likely exacerbate various health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, that are already more common among those with the virus compared with HIV-negative people.

To read the aidsmap article, click here.

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