Treatment: Normal Mortality Risk if Undetectable?

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HIV-positive people with a CD4 count of at least 500 and a fully suppressed viral load as a result of antiretroviral treatment appear to have no increased risk of death when compared with their HIV-negative peers. Researchers analyzed data from two large, randomized controlled trials including 3,280 HIV-positive adults who had a low viral load and CD4s above 350 but did not inject drugs. Study participants were followed an average of 3.7 years; 61 people died during the study. The most common causes were cardiovascular disease or sudden death (19 people, or 31 percent) and non-AIDS cancers (12 people, 19 percent). Only two deaths (3 percent) were related to AIDS. For those with CD4s between 350 and 499, there was an estimated 77 percent increased risk of death compared with the general population. However, there was no mortality risk linked with having a CD4 count above 500 and an undetectable viral load.

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