Treatment: Pill Pushing

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People with HIV may feel pressure to go on treatment. This is according to recent in-depth interviews with more than two dozen HIV-positive Australians, including men who have sex with men and heterosexuals, who were not on HIV meds at the time. On the whole, the participants acknowledged the benefit of HIV treatment but generally felt they weren't ready to commit to adhering to a daily regimen indefinitely. The group appreciated that antiretroviral adherence is both vital and challenging and that all beneficial medications come with risks. (Definitive research, however, shows that early HIV treatment is associated with a net benefit to health.) Considering these misgivings and the pressure to go on ARVs for the public health benefit—treating HIV vastly lowers the risk of transmitting the virus—the participants often felt hostility from others for deciding to remain off treatment.

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