Cancer Drug Wipes Out Viral Load!

December 7, 2017 By Martha Warriner Jarrett

My headline is, of course, a gross exaggeration. But does this news mean we should hope we get cancer?

I'll try not to make this too technical, but some recent research seems to suggest that one of the fancy new drugs that's been developed to treat advanced lung cancer (Opdivo) might also operate to flush out the HIV virus that's hidden in the viral reservoir and then wipe it out. Finding and emptying the viral reservoir is, of course, important when it comes to actually curing HIV/AIDS, so anything that shows promise of doing so is great news.

But don't get too excited yet. This report only deals with one case and it was discovered because the cancer patient being treated with Opdivo just happened to also have lung cancer. And while you don't have to have cancer before you can receive the drug (probably as an "off-label" use), a lot more testing will have to be done before this drug becomes a viable treatment or (dare we say) cure for HIV/AIDS. But so long as there is no cure—and virtually no money is being spent to find one—anything that looks like it might offer one is exciting news to those of us living with HIV. So stay tuned.

As for me, I'm not holding my breath.

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