



Watch HIV Scientists at CROI 2024 Discuss a Promising Study on Newborns

Researcher Deborah Persaud speaks with NIH's Catey Laube at science conference #CROI2024 about starting treatment promptly after birth.

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On the final day of the 2024 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI), HIV.gov spoke with Deborah Persaud, MD, Professor of Pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Director of the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at Johns Hopkins Children's Center, who reported findings from a study about whether very early initiation of antiretroviral therapy (ART) may limit the establishment of [HIV reservoirs](#) in newborns, potentially enabling ART-free remission. Dr. Persaud spoke with Catey Laube of NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). Watch our conversation with Dr. Persaud at the top of this article.

Four Children Achieve ART-free HIV Remission

The study Dr. Persaud presented at CROI began 10 years ago. [HIV.gov spoke to Dr. Persaud at CROI 2013](#) when she presented the case of an infant born with HIV in Mississippi who initiated treatment at 30 hours of life, was taken off their ART at 18 months of age and remained in remission with no evidence of detectable HIV for 27 months. This was an uncommon finding because, typically, an interruption in treatment will lead to rapid resumption of HIV replication and detectable virus in the blood within weeks. Dr. Persaud and colleagues then began the NIH-supported study she reported on at CROI this year to carefully replicate that result in a research setting to determine whether the ART-free remission the "Mississippi baby" experienced was due to the very early start of HIV treatment within hours after birth and could be effective in other children.

Dr. Persaud reported on the experience of six children, all aged 5 years, who met multiple criteria to be eligible for a closely monitored ART interruption and whose parents consented. Four of the six children experienced HIV remission, defined as the absence of evidence of replicating virus for at least 48 weeks off ART. One of them had detectable HIV after 80 weeks. Two children did not experience remission, and their HIV became detectable within a few weeks after ART interruption.

Children whose HIV became detectable resumed ART. The other three remain in remission. These promising findings will be followed by additional research to better understand the biological process that enabled the children to experience HIV remission off ART and to study early ART with newer drug regimens than were used in this initial study. Dr. Persaud cautioned that much more evidence is needed before this approach could be possible outside of the strictly monitored research setting. [Read the study abstract.](#) [Read NIAID's summary of the study findings.](#)

Other Studies of Interest Presented on Wednesday

Some of the other NIH-supported research presented at CROI included a study that identified sex-based differences in latent HIV reservoirs, highlighting unique aspects of reservoirs in women. The findings point to the importance of including cisgender women in HIV cure studies. Another showed that a novel hepatitis B vaccine achieved up to 99% protection in people with HIV who had previously not responded to conventional hepatitis B vaccines.

Catch Up on More HIV Research Updates

HIV.gov has shared other interviews from CROI 2024 with federal HIV leaders, participating researchers, and community members. You can find all of them on HIV.gov's social media channels and recapped here on the blog this week and next week.

About CROI

CROI is an annual scientific meeting that brings together leading researchers and clinical investigators from around the world to present and discuss the research that can help accelerate global progress in the response to HIV and other infectious diseases, including STIs and viral hepatitis. More than 3,600 HIV and infectious disease researchers from 73 countries gathered in Denver and virtually from March 3-6 this year for the conference where over 1,000 summaries of original research were presented. Visit the [conference website](#) for more information. Session webcasts and more resources will be published there for public access in 30 days.

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