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## Anti-bodies can halt infection at early stage

BEATRIZ Apellaniz, PhD holder of the UPV/EHU-University of the Basque Country, has studied in her PhD thesis HIV regions that could be used to design a vaccine. The researcher has focussed her research on a specific region of the surface protein of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which is responsible for the Autoimmune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), one of the diseases with the greatest human morbidity and mortality.

This region, known as the MPER (Membrane-proximal External Region) is one of the domains that is responsible for the fusion of the virus with the cell that it is going to affect, and it is of particular interest, since, as Doctor Apellaniz explains, there are known to be infected people whose immune systems are capable of generating antibodies that target this region in particular. It has been demonstrated that these antibodies could halt the infection in its early stages, which is what a preventive vaccine is seeking to do.

Apellaniz adds that it is a region that does not mutate easily: "Although HIV mutates very quickly, this specific region is very well preserved, so it is a good starting point for designing vaccines or treatments that would not become less effective as HIV goes on mutating."

So the thesis Functional and structural characterisation of peptides derived from HIV-1 gp41 membrane-proximal and transmembrane domains.