

Headline	Smoking more deadly for HIV patients than the virus		
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# Smoking more deadly for HIV patients than the virus

**H**IV MEDICATIONS and treatments are successful enough that those who are diagnosed and receive treatment early are able to live out a close to normal length life, however, their lifespan could be shortened if they are a smoker. A new Danish study, led by Marie Helleberg of Copenhagen University Hospital and published in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, suggests that HIV patients getting organised care, receiving free access to antiretroviral therapy, and who also smoke end up losing years off their life due to smoking, not HIV. Helleberg and her colleagues approximated the effect of smoking on risk of death, life expectancy, mortality, and the number of life years lost due to smoking compared with those lost due to HIV. The researchers used data from 3,000 HIV-infected patients who were treated in Denmark between 1995 to 2010.

The research team also looked at the relationship between mortality and smoking among HIV patients and the nation's background population. Dr Helleberg noted that in places where HIV care is blended into health care, and antiretroviral therapy is available without cost, "more than 60 per cent of deaths among HIV patients are associated with smoking," instead of HIV. Smoking status varied a patient's approximated life expectancy greatly.

For example, a current smoker who had HIV and was 35 years old had a life expectancy of 62.6 years, in contrast with 78.4 years for a patient with HIV who did not smoke. The years lost from smoking were twice as high as those lost from HIV among HIV-infected patients. The excess mortality of HIV patients who were also smokers was found to be three times greater than patients not diagnosed with HIV.

The authors explained: "Our findings emphasise the importance of counselling HIV patients on smoking cessation as smoking may impact their life expectancy considerably more than the HIV infection itself." The outcomes also point out the importance of smoking cessation interventions for eliminating smoking among HIV patients and the regular population. Smokers who quit have a cardiovascular disease risk that drops immediately, but they still have an elevated risk of cancer for many years after stopping. The push for well-organised HIV treatment is essential, according to Dr Helleberg. Smoking creates an extra threat for patients with HIV. Patients who get integrated care from several different health care professionals, including those who can aid patients with lifestyle changes, are able to receive support for decisions to quit smoking. 

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