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Controlling HIV

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a retrovirus, meaning it stores its genetic material as RNA or ribonucleic acid

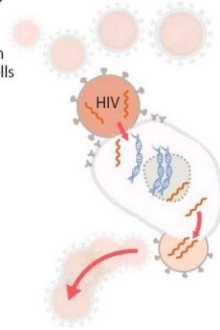
How HIV attacks

Attacks the immune system by invading white blood cells known as CD4+ T cells

Virus builds DNA inside the host cell, replicates and leaves cell to die off

Normal CD4+Tcell count in a healthy person is 800 - 1,200/mm³

AIDS occurs when CD4+ T cell count falls below 200/mm³



Antiretrovirals (ARV)

- ▶ Block the virus's ability to replicate
- ▶ There are different types that work on different parts of the process
- ▶ Patients take ARVs in combination (usually of three) to counter the effect of the virus mutating to survive

36.7 million people living with HIV (25.5 million in Sub-Saharan Africa)

18.2 million people were receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) globally as of 2016

1.1 million AIDS deaths in 2015

Source: CDC/WHO/UNAIDS/Avert.org/amfar.org/merckmanuals.com



10-year lifespan gain for some HIV patients

PARIS: The life expectancy of HIV-infected people in Europe and the United States has been boosted by a decade since anti-AIDS drugs became available in the mid-1990s, researchers said yesterday.

In fact, a 20-year-old who began treatment any time since 2008, now has an expected lifespan, about 78 years, approaching that of an uninfected person, said a study in *The Lancet HIV*.

Life expectancy in the 'general population', excluding people infected with the AIDS-causing virus, is 79 years for men and 85 for women in France, and 78 for men and 82 for women in the United States, said the researchers.

People who started taking antiretroviral treatment (ART) in 2008 or thereafter lived longer, healthier lives than those who started treatment in earlier years, they added.

This was likely because modern drugs have fewer toxic side-effects, there are now more options for people with a drug-resistant HIV strain, and better treatment of other infections and conditions.

"With the perception that HIV-positive people will live into old

age, clinicians are screening for and treating comorbidities (diseases on top of HIV) more aggressively," said the paper.

These included heart disease, hepatitis C and cancer.

Conducted in Europe and America, the study included data on more than 88,000 HIV patients.

"Information about life expectancy in people living with HIV and the knowledge that it could be approaching that of the general population is important to motivate at-risk individuals to test for HIV and convince those infected to start ART immediately," said the study.

It could also "decrease stigmatisation of people living with HIV and help them to obtain insurance or employment".

ART, a cocktail of three or more drugs that block the virus from replicating, first became widely used in 1996.

It does not cure the disease, and treatment is lifelong.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that ART be started in all people as soon as possible after diagnosis. — AFP