

A cure for HIV infection reported

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By Dr Brighton Chireka

HIV infection is no longer a death sentence and research continues to find a cure for HIV infection. A 44 year old British man with HIV infection is the first of 50 people to complete a trial treatment designed by scientists and doctors from 5 of British leading universities. The results are so far encouraging as early tests on this British man have shown no sign of the virus following treatment.

The study for a cure for HIV infection

This study is a big collaborative effort involving 5 leading British universities and funded by Medical Research Council. Around 50 volunteers, all recently infected with HIV , were put on standard Antiretroviral drugs until the virus was almost undetectable, and then given a drug normally used in cancer treatment - to make the virus reveal itself(deactivate dormant HIV) .The participants also received a therapeutic vaccine that helped the immune system to recognise the virus and destroy the infected cells. The trial to flush out the virus and prompt the immune system to recognised it is now called the "kick and kill approach "

HIV is able to hide from the immune system in dormant cells where highly sophisticated modern testing cannot find it, and therefore resist therapy. The treatment being used in this research endeavours to trick the virus into emerging from its hiding places and then trigger the body's immune system to recognise it and attack it.

Currently we know that Antiretoviral drugs alone are highly effective at stopping the virus from reproducing but do not eradicate the disease, so must be taken for life.

The findings of a possible cure of HIV infection are a cause for celebration but we are still a long way to go before this treatment can be deemed successful. Previously we rejoiced that some people had been "cured" only for virus to re-emerge a few years later. The researchers in this study are not sure if the virus has actually gone forever hence the continuation the usage of antiretroviral drugs .

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Why should we be cautious about a cure for HIV infection?

It is difficult to declare a patient clear of HIV as attempts in the past backfired . The case that comes to mind is that of a girl in Mississippi who was put on a strong course of antiretroviral drugs within 30hrs of her birth in 2010 after her mother was found to be HIV positive. Treatment

continued until the hospital lost contact with the mother 18 months later. When mother and child reappeared five months later the baby had no detectable virus in her blood, raising hopes that early intervention was a cure for HIV. This was sadly not the case as two years later the virus re-emerged.

The only person believed to have been cured was Timothy Ray Brown, an American treated in Germany. He needed a bone marrow transplant to replace his own cancerous cells with stem cells that would remake his immune system; his doctor found him a donor who was naturally resistant to HIV infection due to a genetic mutation that blocks HIV from entering the cells in the human body.

Sadly other HIV infected patients that had bone transplant have not been cured as their donors were not naturally resistant to HIV infection.

You may want to read more on HIV below

<http://docbeecee.co.uk/aids-is-no-longer-a-death-sentence-getting-to-zero-transmission-is-our-aim/>

This article was compiled by Dr Brighton Chireka , who is a GP and a blogger based in Kent in the United Kingdom. Feel free to contact him at info@docbeecee.co.uk and you can read more of his work on his blog at [DR CHIREKA'S BLOG](#)

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