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! therapy is the most Powerful Medicine

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1. Encouraging health insurance companies to invest in patient .education
2. .Advocating information therapy
3. rk ofSetting up a national netwo .patient education centers
4. Developing patient educational materials in Indian Languages for .the web

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Hiv & Aids



Understanding HIV & Aids

What are HIV and AIDS?

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is the virus that causes AIDS. HIV attacks the immune system by destroying CD4 positive (CD4+) T cells, a type of white blood cell that is vital for fighting against infection. The destruction of these cells leaves people infected with HIV vulnerable to other infections, diseases and other complications.

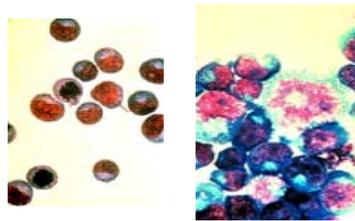
The acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is the final stage of HIV infection. A person infected with HIV is diagnosed with AIDS when he or she has one or more opportunistic infections, such as pneumonia or tuberculosis, and has a dangerously low number of CD4+ T cells (less than 200 cells per cubic millimeter of blood).

How HIV Causes AIDS

HIV destroys CD4 positive (CD4+) T cells, which are white blood cells crucial to maintaining the function of the human immune system. As HIV attacks these cells, the person infected with the virus is less equipped to fight off infection and disease, ultimately resulting in the development of AIDS.

Most people who are infected with HIV can carry the virus for years before developing any serious symptoms. But over time, HIV levels increase in the blood while the number of CD4+ T cells decline. Antiretroviral medicines can help reduce the amount of virus in the body, preserve CD4+ T cells and dramatically slow the destruction of the immune system.

People who are not infected with HIV and generally are in good health have roughly



800 to 1,200 CD4+ T cells per cubic millimeter (mm^3) of blood. Some people who have been diagnosed with AIDS have fewer than 50 CD4+ T cells in their entire body.

Symptoms

Early Symptoms

In the initial stages of HIV infection, most people will have very few, if any, symptoms. Within a month or two after infection, individuals may experience a flu-like illness, including: Fever, Headache, Tiredness, Enlarged lymph nodes in the neck and groin area.

These symptoms usually disappear within a week to a month and are often mistaken for another viral infection, such as influenza (flu). However, during this period people are highly infectious because HIV is present in large quantities in genital fluids and blood. Some people infected with HIV may experience more severe symptoms initially or a longer duration of clinical symptoms, while others may remain symptom-free for 10 years or more.

Later Symptoms

During the late stages of HIV infection, the virus severely weakens the immune system, and people infected with the virus

may experience the following symptoms: Rapid weight loss, Recurring fever or profuse night sweats, Extreme and unexplained fatigue, Prolonged swelling of the lymph glands in the armpits, groin or neck, Diarrhea that lasts for more than a week, Sores of the mouth, anus or genitals, Pneumonia, Red, brown, pink or purplish blotches on or under the skin or inside the mouth, nose or eyelids, Memory loss, depression and other neurological disorders.

Each of these symptoms can be related to other illnesses. The only way to determine if you are infected with HIV is to get tested.

Testing

Types of HIV Tests

A sample of blood to see if it contains human antibodies (disease-fighting proteins) specific to HIV. The two key types of HIV antibody tests are the enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) and the Western blot.

HIV Testing in Infants

It is recommended that all pregnant women get tested for HIV before and/or during delivery. Knowing the HIV status of the mother allows physicians to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission by providing antiretroviral treatment to both mothers infected with HIV and their newborn infants.

