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Antiretroviral Therapy in a Thousand Patients with AIDS in Haiti

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ABSTRACT

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Background: The one-year survival rate of adults and children with the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), without antiretroviral therapy, has been about 30 percent in Haiti. Antiretroviral therapy has recently become available in Haiti and in other developing countries. Data on the efficacy of antiretroviral therapy in developing countries are limited. High rates of coinfection with tropical diseases and tuberculosis, along with malnutrition and limited laboratory monitoring of therapy, may decrease the efficacy of antiretroviral therapy in these countries.

Methods: We studied the efficacy of antiretroviral therapy in the first 1004 consecutive patients with AIDS and without previous antiretroviral therapy who were treated beginning in March 2003 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Results: During a 14-month period, three-drug antiretroviral therapy was initiated in 1004 patients, including 94 children under 13 years of age. At enrollment, the median CD4 T-cell count in adults and adolescents was 131 per cubic millimeter (interquartile range, 55 to 211 per cubic millimeter); in children, a median of 13 percent of T cells were CD4-positive (interquartile range, 8 to 20 percent). According to a Kaplan?Meier survival analysis, 87 percent of adults and adolescents and 98 percent of children were alive one year after beginning treatment. In a subgroup of 100 adult and adolescent patients who were followed for 48 to 56 weeks, 76 patients had fewer than 400 copies of human immunodeficiency virus RNA per milliliter. In adults and adolescents, the median increase in the CD4 T-cell count from baseline to 12 months was 163 per cubic millimeter (interquartile range, 77 to 251 per cubic millimeter). In children, the median percentage of CD4 T cells rose from 13 percent at baseline to 26 percent (interquartile range, 22 to 36 percent) at 12 months. Treatment-limiting toxic effects occurred in 102 of the 910 adults and adolescents (11 percent) and 5 of the 94 children (5 percent).

Conclusions: This report documents the feasibility of effective antiretroviral therapy in a large number of patients in an impoverished country. Overall, the outcomes are similar to those in the United States. These results provide evidence in support of international efforts to make antiretroviral therapy available to patients with AIDS in developing countries.

- Antiretrovirals

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