Can antiretroviral therapy be used to prevent sexual transmission of human immunodeficiency virus type 1?

Mina Hosseinipour, Myron S Cohen, Pietro Vernazza & Angela D M Kashuba

Approximately 5 million people annually are newly infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Although education, behavior modification, and promotion of condom use are effective transmission-prevention measures, the severity of the pandemic demands that all possible prevention strategies be explored. Antiretroviral therapy has the potential to decrease sexual transmission of HIV type 1 by reducing levels of HIV RNA and thus decreasing the risk that infected persons will transmit the disease or by its use as preexposure or postexposure prophylaxis. In this article, we explore the rationale for using antiretroviral therapy to prevent sexual transmission of HIV, as well as the limitations of this approach.

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