

United Press International

Baby 'functionally cured' of HIV

<p>Staff Writer</p>

March 3, 2013

ATLANTA, March 3 (UPI) -- U.S. researchers say a 2-year-old is exhibiting a "functional cure" to HIV after getting anti-retroviral therapy within 30 hours of birth.

Researchers at the Johns Hopkins Children's Center, the University of Mississippi Medical Center and the University of Massachusetts Medical School described what they called the "first case of a functional cure of HIV in an infant," Sunday at the 20th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in Atlanta.

Lead author Dr. Deborah Persaud of University of Massachusetts Medical School and Dr. Hannah Gay of the University of Mississippi Medical Center said the infant received anti-retroviral therapy within 30 hours of birth and a series of tests showed progressively diminishing viral presence in the infant's blood, until it reached undetectable levels 29 days after birth.

The infant remained on antivirals until 18 months of age, at which point the child was lost to follow-up -- the mother no longer brought the child in for treatment, the study said.

Ten months after discontinuation of treatment, the child underwent repeated standard blood tests, none of which detected HIV presence in the blood. Tests for HIV-specific antibodies -- the standard clinical indicator of HIV infection -- also remained negative throughout, the researchers said.

The child is now described as functionally cured, a condition that occurs when a patient achieves and maintains long-term viral remission without lifelong treatment and standard clinical tests fail to detect HIV replication in the blood.

In contrast to a sterilizing cure -- a complete eradication of all viral traces from the body -- a functional cure occurs when viral presence is so minimal, it remains undetectable by standard clinical tests, yet discernible by ultra-sensitive methods, the researchers explained.

[See the topic on aegis.org](http://aegis.org)