

THE NETHERLANDS: Low CD4s, Not Viral Load, Increase Risk of Non-AIDS Diseases for Those Off Treatment

National AIDS Treatment Advocacy Project

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The National AIDS Treatment Advocacy Project (NATAP) reports that individuals with untreated HIV and a CD4 count below 350 have more than twice the risk of developing serious non-AIDS diseases as those with levels over 500. Researchers studied a cohort of 13,000 people from the ATHENA study in the Netherlands. The participants were diagnosed with HIV in 1998 or later and had not been taking antiretrovirals (ARVs). The researchers considered new diagnoses of major cardiovascular diseases such as myocardial infarction, stroke and invasive coronary procedures, liver fibrosis or cirrhosis, and non-AIDS-defining cancers. In 18,641 person-years of follow-up, 208 participants (1.6 percent) developed new non-AIDS diseases in one of the three categories. There were 82 with non-AIDS cancers, 79 cases of liver disease, and 53 cardiovascular incidents. There was an overall likelihood that 6 percent of individuals with a CD4 count below 200 would receive a diagnosis of one of these non-AIDS diseases every year. Compared with persons having a CD4 count of 500 or higher, those with a CD4 count below 200 had more than four times the risk, and those with CD4 counts between 200 and 349 had more than twice the increased risk for developing non-AIDS diseases. This study was presented at the 20th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, March 36, 2013, in Atlanta.

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