

ITALY: HIV Meds Protect Against Doubled Cancer Risk in Positive Men

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Italian researchers determined that men with HIV have approximately twice the risk of getting non-AIDS-defining cancers (NADCs) compared to the general public, but antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) can protect the body from the risk.

The researchers conducted a retrospective study of 5,090 HIV-infected Italian patients who were being treated by the Local Health Authority of Brescia. They found 138 cancers had been diagnosed in 131 patients for a mean incidence rate of 42.6 per 10,000 person years. Median age of cancer patients was 49 years with a range of 28–78 years. The researchers compared cancer rates in participants to those of similar HIV-negative individuals from the same region. They found that men had a 1.86-fold increased rate of cancers. They also found among participants a 3.59-fold increased risk of lung and 3.11-fold increased rate of testicular cancer. The researchers theorized that smoking was probably the major contributing factor for these cancers. Older age increased the cancer risk by 10 percent for each additional year of age. Also, shorter or lack of exposure to ARVs contributed to increased risk.

The researchers concluded that use of ARVs seemed to be beneficial in protecting patients against developing the malignancies. Patients who took little or no ARVs and elderly patients had more HIV-related NADCs.

The full report, “Burden of Non AIDS-Defining and Non-Virus Related Cancers among HIV-Infected Patients in cART Era,” was published online in the journal *AIDS Research and Human Retroviruses* (2013; doi:10.1089/AID.2012.0321).

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