HIV and Hepatitis C Transmission Routes Are Closely Linked

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The apparent fact that transmission pathways for hepatitis C virus (HCV) and HIV frequently converge may help better tailor prevention efforts, aidsmap reports. Publishing their findings in the International Journal of Epidemiology, researchers analyzed 15,000 blood samples drawn from 10,000 HIV-positive people enrolled in the Swiss HIV Cohort Study.

A total of 2,768 (28 percent) of the individuals whose samples were studied were hep C positive, and another 208 (2 percent) had recently contracted hep C. Using a process called phylogenetic analysis and focusing on subtype B of HIV, the investigators identified 1,555 pairs of blood samples in which the virus was genetically similar enough between the two to suggest that one person had infected the other with HIV.

After controlling for various factors, the researchers found that those who were a member of one of the HIV pairs were 3.2-times as likely to be coinfected with hep C if their partner was also coinfected. For those in the study who started off as hep C negative, being a member of one of the HIV pairs in which the other member was coinfected raised their likelihood of eventually becoming coinfected by a factor of 2.1.

The study concluded that these findings indicate “the occurrence of domestic and sexual HCV transmission and allows the identification of patients with a high HCV-infection risk.”

To read the aidsmap story, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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