

Oral dextran not effective

Dextran, a drug that in lab experiments protects cells against HIV, does not move from the stomach to the bloodstream after the drug is taken orally. Using newly available tests to measure dextran, doctors at The Johns Hopkins University found high levels of dextran after volunteers received dextran directly into their bloodstream, but no dextran after volunteers received dextran orally. Although research will continue to explore the antiviral effects of dextran, there is no reason to take dextran orally.

Reference: *K. Lorensten and others. "Dextran Sulfate is Poorly Absorbed After Oral Administration." Annals of Internal Medicine. October 1, 1989, pp: 561-65.*

together with lower doses of AZT, it may reduce the side-effects of AZT. Lower doses of AZT combined with INPX would be less expensive and potentially more effective than AZT alone. So far, studies with INPX and AZT have only involved a small number of people.

Reference: *C. De Simone and others. "Inosine Pranobex and Zidovudine Metabolism." The Lancet. October 21, 1989, p: 977.*

Drug helps PWAs with histoplasmosis

PWAs had fewer relapses of an opportunistic infection called disseminated histoplasmosis when they received weekly intravenous injections of a drug called amphotericin B. Although histoplasmosis is uncommon, this disease causes death after a long, wasting illness. Effective treatment to control histoplasmosis will improve the length and quality of life for PWAs with the disease.

Reference: *D. McKinsey and others. "Long-term Amphotericin B Therapy for Disseminated Histoplasmosis in Patients with AIDS." Annals of Internal Medicine. October 15, 1989, pp: 655-59.*

AIDS incubation time

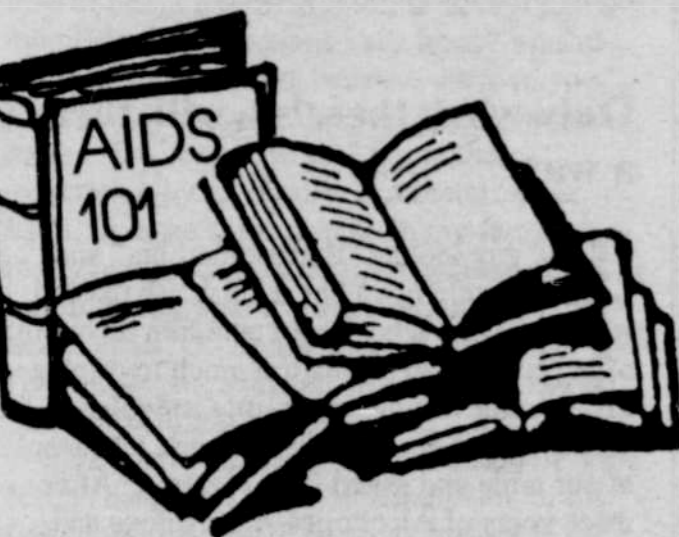
In a large study of hemophiliacs, researchers found that more HIV-infected men than adolescents developed AIDS. Within the first eight years of HIV infection, AIDS developed in 43 percent of men over 34 years of age, 26 percent of men 18-34 years, and 13 percent of boys younger than 18 years. By studying hemophiliacs, scientists can pinpoint the date of HIV infection, and make accurate predictions about the number of people who will eventually develop AIDS.

Reference: *J. Goedert and others. "A Prospective Study of HIV-1 Infection and the Development of AIDS in Subjects with Hemophilia." The New England Journal of Medicine. October 26, 1989, pp: 1141-47.*

Chromosome found that speeds HIV reproduction

In laboratory experiments, scientists have shown that HIV reproduces much more quickly when infected cells have genes found on one unique chromosome. These genes either directly speed up the rate at which HIV reproduces, or they interfere with another mechanism that naturally slows the rate at which HIV reproduces. Understanding the way cells interact with HIV may eventually lead to therapies that control HIV infection by slowing the rate of reproduction.

Reference: *C. Hart and others. "Human Chromosome 12 is Required for Elevated HIV-1 Expression in Human-Hamster Hybrid Cells." Science. October 27, 1989, pp: 488-90.*



BY JEFFREY ZURLINDEN

Long-term AZT useful

Researchers have continued to study the men who started taking AZT during the first experiments with the drug over three years ago. These men still benefit from taking AZT, the researchers conclude. AZT decreased the number of men with ARC who progressed to AIDS. The men who started taking AZT when they had ARC survived longer than the men who started taking AZT when they had AIDS. However, more than half of the men who had AIDS when they started the study were still alive almost two years after their first episode of pneumonia.

Reference: *M. Mischl and others. "Prolonged Zidovudine Therapy in Patients with AIDS and Advanced ARC." JAMA. November 3, 1989, pp: 2405-2410.*

Compound Q gives mixed results

The controversial drug compound Q decreases the amount of HIV, but also causes many side-effects. Made from a cucumber-like plant grown in China, compound Q selectively kills cells that are infected with HIV. However, almost all of the PWAs taking compound Q developed side-effects — fever, rashes, violent dreams and coma. Although three PWAs died while taking compound Q, their deaths may have been caused by severe immune deficiency and not compound Q. Plans are under way to combine compound Q with other drugs that fight HIV.

Reference: *R. Buderl. "Row Over Controversial New AIDS drug." Nature. September 28, 1989, p: 267.*

New drug teams with AZT

People infected with HIV need smaller doses of AZT, and can take AZT less often, if they also take a new drug called inosine pranobex, also called INPX or Viruxan. Italian physicians say that INPX changes the way AZT is metabolized, and prolongs the amount of time AZT remains active. By itself, INPX does not cause side-effects; and

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