The end of AIDS: HIV infection as a chronic disease

The success of antiretroviral therapy has led some people to now ask whether the end of AIDS is possible. For patients who are motivated to take therapy and who have access to lifelong treatment, AIDS-related illnesses are no longer the primary threat, but a new set of HIV-associated complications have emerged, resulting in a novel chronic disease that for many will span several decades of life. Treatment does not fully restore immune health; as a result, several inflammation-associated or immunodeficiency complications such as cardiovascular disease and cancer are increasing in importance. Cumulative toxic effects from exposure to antiretroviral drugs for decades can cause clinically-relevant metabolic disturbances and end-organ damage. Concerns are growing that the multimorbidity associated with HIV disease could affect healthy ageing and overwhelm some health-care systems, particularly those in resource-limited regions that have yet to develop a chronic care model fully. In view of the problems inherent in the treatment and care for patients with a chronic disease that might persist for several decades, a global effort to identify a cure is now underway.
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