



INTEGRATED HIV/HTN

Exploring the Impact of Antiretroviral Therapy



**on Hypertension in People
Living with HIV (PLHIV)**

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INTRODUCTION



The healthcare landscape is continually evolving, especially with new treatments that significantly improve the quality of life for patients. One such treatment in the realm of medical science is Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) for people living with HIV. ART has improved the life span of people living with HIV thus they are at risk of developing HTN. Let's dive into this intriguing connection and understand the impact of ART on hypertension in HIV patients.

WHAT IS ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY (ART)?



Antiretroviral Therapy is a combination of medications used to treat HIV. By reducing the viral load in the body, ART helps prevent the progression of the disease to AIDs, allowing people with HIV to live longer, healthier lives. This is nothing short of a revolution in HIV treatment.

THE HIDDEN SIDE EFFECT: HYPERTENSION



While ART is a game-changer, it comes with its own challenges. One of the emerging concerns is hypertension. Studies have shown that people on ART are at a higher risk of developing high blood pressure. Here's why this happens:

1. **Weight Gain:** ART can cause significant weight gain, especially abdominal fat, a risk factor in increasing blood pressure.
2. **Changes in Lipid Levels:** ART can lead to dyslipidaemia, an imbalance of lipids in the blood that contributes to hypertension.
3. **Direct Effects on Blood Vessels:** Some antiretroviral drugs may directly affect the lining of the blood vessels, causing them to stiffen and thus raise blood pressure.

WHY IS HYPERTENSION A CONCERN FOR HIV PATIENTS?



Hypertension is often termed a “silent killer” because it can go unnoticed until severe complications arise. For HIV patients, uncontrolled high blood pressure can be particularly problematic as it increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases, which are already a concern given the long-term impact of HIV and its treatment.

MANAGING HYPERTENSION WHILE ON ART



Addressing hypertension in HIV patients requires a comprehensive approach:

1. **Medication Adjustments:** Sometimes, altering the ART regimen can help manage blood pressure. This must be done carefully under medical supervision to ensure that HIV remains controlled.
2. **Lifestyle Modifications:** Encouraging healthy choices, such as a balanced diet low in salt, regular exercise, and quitting smoking, can significantly reduce blood pressure.
3. **Regular Monitoring:** Frequent blood pressure checks can help catch hypertension early, allowing for timely intervention.
4. **Integrated Care Models:** Healthcare systems are increasingly adopting integrated care models to manage HIV and hypertension simultaneously. This holistic approach ensures that both conditions are treated effectively.



Recent studies and trials have shed light on potential solutions to this double-edged sword of ART and hypertension. Innovations in medication and healthcare delivery models are showing promise in minimising the adverse effects on blood pressure while maintaining the effectiveness of HIV treatment.



Understanding and managing the impact of ART on hypertension in HIV patients is crucial for improving their quality of life and health outcomes. As research continues, the goal is to refine treatment that offer the life-saving benefits of ART without compromising cardiovascular health.