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## Premature Aging of the Brain Seen in HIV Patients

With AIDS growing among seniors, decline in brain function a serious concern, researchers say

TUESDAY, Jan. 26 (HealthDay News) -- Premature aging is striking the brains of people infected with the virus that causes AIDS, new research suggests.

It's not clear if the virus or the drugs that treat it -- or both -- are contributing to the aging. But one thing is clear: The blood flow in HIV patients is about the same as in those of uninfected people who are 15 to 20 years older.

"The graying of the AIDS patient community makes this infection's effects on the brain a significant source of concern," study author Dr. Beau Ances, an assistant professor of neurology at Washington University in St. Louis, said in a university news release.

"Patients are surviving into their senior years, and a number of them are coming forward to express concerns about problems they're having with memory and other cognitive functions," Ances said.

An estimated 14 percent to 18 percent of all AIDS patients in the United States are more than 50 years old, and older people face one of the highest rates of new infections. By 2015, people over the age of 50 may account for more than half of all AIDS patients.

In the study, researchers used MRI scans to study the blood flow in the brains of 26 HIV-infected people and 25 other people who weren't infected. The average age and education level of the participants were similar.

The researchers found reduced blood flow in the brains of younger HIV-infected patients who were infected recently, not just the older ones.

The study was released online in advance of publication in the Feb. 1 print issue of the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*.

### More information

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [HIV/AIDS](#).

-- Randy Dotinga

SOURCE: Washington University in St. Louis, news release, January 2010

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