HIV News

There’s real hope for HIV therapy, but you have to read beyond the headlines.

May 24, 2006 By Laura Whitehorn

Hype Raises Hope: In March, headlines that two HIV meds showed “promise at preventing” HIV had people hyperventilating. Unfortunately, the news was inflated. The HIV meds Viread and Emtriva may prevent HIV transmission as well as treat the virus, and early tests of the drugs did well at protecting monkeys. But the monkeys were dosed for nine days before HIV exposure; they hit higher blood levels of one drug than humans would; and there’s no proof yet that these meds prevent HIV infection in people. If they don’t, folks who use them for that purpose could develop resistance to them, limiting later treatment choices. For now, condoms have the best HIV-prevention record, even if lots of people don’t want to use them.

Restyled Genes: Not satisfied with having 21 approved HIV drugs, some researchers are experimenting with altered genes to suppress the virus. One participant in a University of California San Francisco trial reached a milestone: He’d controlled his HIV without meds for a year after being treated with genetically enhanced immune cells. Study results will be announced in early 2007.

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