



Women Lead the Way in the HIV Response

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DESCRIPTION

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection has posed one of the most significant global health challenges of the past several decades. Since the emergence of the epidemic, tremendous progress has been made in the development of antiretroviral therapy transforming HIV/AIDS from a fatal illness to a chronic, manageable condition for many individuals. This comprehensive review provides an in-depth analysis of HIV therapy, covering the evolution of treatment approaches, mechanisms of action of antiretroviral drugs, challenges in therapy management, emerging trends, and future directions in the field. The advent of antiretroviral therapy in the mid-1990s marked a turning point in the management of HIV/AIDS, revolutionizing the outlook for individuals living with the virus. ART suppresses viral replication, preserves immune function, and reduces the risk of HIV transmission, thereby improving both individual health outcomes and public health outcomes. However, despite the remarkable progress achieved in HIV therapy, several challenges persist, including drug resistance, treatment adherence, comorbidities, and access to care. This review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of HIV therapy, highlighting advancements, challenges, and future directions in the field. The evolution of HIV therapy can be traced back to the early days of the epidemic when the focus was primarily on palliative care and management of opportunistic infections. Mechanisms of Action of Antiretroviral Drugs: Antiretroviral drugs exert their therapeutic effects by targeting key enzymes and processes involved in the HIV replication cycle. NRTIs and NNRTIs inhibit the activity of the viral enzyme reverse transcriptase, thereby preventing the conversion of viral RNA into DNA. PIs block the activity of the viral enzyme protease, which is essential for the maturation of new viral particles. INSTIs inhibit the integration of viral DNA into the host cell genome, while entry inhibitors interfere with viral attachment and entry into host cells. By targeting multiple stages of the replication cycle, combination ART effectively suppresses viral replication, restores immune function, and improves clinical outcomes for individuals living with HIV. Despite the success of ART in improving the prognosis of HIV/AIDS, several challenges persist in the management of

HIV therapy. Adherence to treatment regimens remains a critical determinant of therapeutic success, as suboptimal adherence can lead to virological failure, drug resistance, and disease progression. Moreover, the long-term toxicities associated with some antiretroviral drugs, such as metabolic complications, cardiovascular disease, and renal dysfunction, pose additional challenges for therapy management. Drug resistance is another significant concern, necessitating regular monitoring of viral load and genotype testing to detect resistance mutations and guide treatment decisions. Additionally, access to HIV care and treatment remains unequal, particularly in resource-limited settings, where barriers such as cost, stigma, and healthcare infrastructure limit the delivery of essential services to those in need. Emerging Trends and Future Directions: Recent advancements in HIV therapy have focused on addressing existing challenges and improving treatment outcomes for individuals living with HIV.

CONCLUSION

HIV therapy has evolved significantly since the early days of the epidemic, leading to dramatic improvements in the prognosis and quality of life for individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Combination ART, with its potent antiretroviral activity and tolerable side effect profile, has become the cornerstone of HIV treatment, enabling long-term viral suppression and immune reconstitution. However, challenges such as treatment adherence, drug resistance, and access to care persist, underscoring the ongoing need for research, innovation, and investment in HIV therapy. By addressing these challenges and embracing emerging treatment modalities, we can continue to advance the field of HIV therapy and ultimately achieve the goal of ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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