

CURING HIV



Issue

A patient from US was recently cured of HIV virus, the one that causes AIDS. She became the third person in the world to be cured.

Details

- The patient was suffering from leukemia since 2017 and underwent a stem cell transplant from a donor who was naturally resistant to HIV.
- The case was the first instance of use of umbilical cord blood to cure the infection. It is expected to make HIV treatment methods more popular.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

- HIV is an infection that attacks the immune system of the body by destroying the body's immune cells called CD4.
- CD4 cells are mainly involved in responding to infection. Once they are destroyed, the immune system naturally weakens and body becomes vulnerable to several infections.

Spread of infection

- Infection is spread from one person to another through body fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluids, rectal fluids and breastmilk.
- Main ways of transmission is through sharing syringes, unprotected sex, contaminated blood transfusion and also from mother to child.

The recent treatment

- The woman was diagnosed of HIV in 2013 and began receiving antiretroviral drugs to keep her virus levels low.
- After getting diagnosed with leukemia in 2017, she received a transplant of umbilical cord blood as part of treatment.
- Since the donor was resistant to HIV, the woman was cured of the infection. She now does not need antiretroviral drugs.

Significance

- This is the first instance that an umbilical cord blood transplant was successfully carried out on an HIV patient.
- The method does not need perfect match of donors. It opens up treatment options for people from diverse racial backgrounds.

Concerns

Studies have shown that the new transplant method may be too risky for most people living with HIV.

NOTES

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