

Obesity may have adverse role in HIV treatment

Written by Special to the NNPA from the St. Louis American
Thursday, 07 January 2010 17:32

(NNPA) - The immune systems of HIV patients who are obese does not respond to antiretroviral therapy as well as do those of people of normal weight, according to a study conducted by researchers from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU).

The findings were based on data collected by the USU's Infectious Disease Clinical Research Program (IDCRP) from participants in the U.S. Military Natural History Study, which includes 1,119 people with documented dates of HIV infection between 1986 and 2008.

It was presented recently at the annual meeting of the Infectious Diseases Society of America.

"Obese patients were found to regain fewer CD4-positive T cells after they start therapy than do people with normal weight," said presenter, Dr. Nancy Crum-Cianflone. "These findings don't align with some of the earlier studies done prior to the advent of modern highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), when patients who were obese did better than those of normal or below-normal weight," she said. Crum-Cianflone said this recent data may imply that obesity, which has known ill effects, poses an additional risk to people with HIV.

"The irony is that in the past we have been concerned that patients with HIV infection were losing too much weight," said Captain (Dr.) Greg Martin, director of the IDCPR. "Yet this research is showing that there needs to be more of a focus on maintaining a balanced weight without going to the other extreme."

Crum-Cianflone said it is not clear why obesity should have such an effect. One possibility might be that standard drug dosing set in clinical trials may not be enough for obese patients, or there may be something about the extra weight that limits the effects of medications.