Different strains of HIV

HIV can be divided into two main groups of viruses, as follows:

- HIV-1
- HIV-2

HIV-1 is the most common form of the virus and is found throughout the world. HIV-2 is most commonly found in West Africa but is being gradually displaced by HIV-1. This short report focuses on HIV-1 and its diversity.

HIV-1 can be subdivided into at least nine major strains, or subtypes, as follows:


All of these subtypes are classed as group M (or main) by virologists.

In North America, Western Europe, Australia and Japan, the most common subtype of HIV-1 is subtype B.

There are also six sub-subtypes of HIV-1, as follows:

- A₁ to A₄, F₁ to F₂

There is another group of HIV called group O (outlier).

There are also many circulating recombinant forms (CRFs), at least 48 of them, such as the following:

- AE, AB, BC

Due to travel, tourism and immigration, other strains and CRFs have been appearing in these countries and regions.

When a doctor submits a patient’s blood sample for genotypic resistance testing in Canada, the analysis that is sent from the lab to the doctor’s office lists the clade, or subtype, to which the patient’s virus belongs.

Subtypes of HIV may be an issue for the emerging class of therapies called attachment inhibitors, as we explain in the next report.

—Sean R. Hosein

REFERENCES:


Disclaimer

Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV- and hepatitis C-related illness and the treatments in question.

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