Obesity Trends and Body Mass Index Changes After Starting Antiretroviral Treatment: The Swiss HIV Cohort Study

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Abstract

The factors that contribute to increasing obesity rates in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-positive persons and to body mass index (BMI) increase that typically occurs after starting antiretroviral therapy (ART) are incompletely characterized.

Reference


DOI : 10.1093/ofid/ofu040
PMID : 25734114
Obesity Trends and Body Mass Index Changes After Starting Antiretroviral Treatment: The Swiss HIV Cohort Study

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Background. The factors that contribute to increasing obesity rates in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-positive persons and to body mass index (BMI) increase that typically occurs after starting antiretroviral therapy (ART) are incompletely characterized.

Methods. We describe BMI trends in the entire Swiss HIV Cohort Study (SHCS) population and investigate the effects of demographics, HIV-related factors, and ART on BMI change in participants with data available before and 4 years after first starting ART.

Results. In the SHCS, overweight/obesity prevalence increased from 13% in 1990 (n = 1641) to 38% in 2012 (n = 8150). In the participants starting ART (n = 1601), mean BMI increase was 0.92 kg/m² per year (95% confidence interval, 0.83–1.0) during year 0–1 and 0.31 kg/m² per year (0.29–0.34) during years 1–4. In multivariable analyses, annualized BMI change during year 0–1 was associated with older age (0.15 [0.06–0.24] kg/m²) and CD4 nadir <199 cells/µL compared to nadir >350 (P < .001). Annualized BMI change during years 1–4 was associated with CD4 nadir <100 cells/µL compared to nadir >350 (P = .001) and black compared to white ethnicity (0.28 [0.16–0.37] kg/m²). Individual ART combinations differed little in their contribution to BMI change.

Conclusions. Increasing obesity rates in the SHCS over time occurred at the same time as aging of the SHCS population, demographic changes, earlier ART start, and increasingly widespread ART coverage. Body mass index increase after ART start was typically biphasic, the BMI increase in year 0–1 being as large as the increase in years 1–4 combined. The effect of ART regimen on BMI change was limited.

Keywords. antiretroviral therapy; body mass index; HIV infection; immunosuppression; longitudinal study; obesity.

Obesity is a major long-term concern in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-positive (HIV+) persons given their increased cardiovascular risk [1], and the pathogenic link of obesity to diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease [2, 3], and all-cause mortality [4]. Soon after the introduction of antiretroviral treatment (ART), regional body fat distribution abnormalities became important metabolic concerns [5, 6]. With the use of the thymidine-analogs zidovudine and stavudine essentially disappearing in Western countries, lipatrophy [7] has been receiving less attention and concern has shifted towards lipohypertrophy and obesity. Obesity is now increasingly recognized as a problem in HIV+ persons, and it has been attributed to improved health due to effective ART, normal aging, and obesity trends similar to those seen in the general population [8–17]. However, large-scale, longitudinal analyses are not available.
In this study, we describe obesity trends and concurrent demographic changes from 1990 to 2012 in the nationally representative Swiss HIV Cohort Study (SHCS), which currently follows more than 8000 active patients [18]. We also investigate the contribution of demographics, HIV-related factors, and the most commonly used ART combinations to body mass index (BMI) change after 1 and 4 years of ART in 1601 participants who started a first ART regimen after January 1, 1998. This study represents the most comprehensive longitudinal BMI analysis undertaken in HIV+ persons.

METHODS

Study Participants
Participants included HIV+ persons, aged ≥16 years who were followed in the SHCS (www.shcs.ch) [18]. The study was approved by local ethics committees. All participants provided written informed consent.

We present 2 main types of analyses: first, a population-based descriptive analysis of all SHCS patients with at least 1 available BMI from 1990 to 2012 (Figure 1; Supplementary Figure 1; Supplementary Table 1); second, detailed analyses of BMI changes from 0–1 and 1–4 years after starting ART in participants initiating a first ART regimen after January 1, 1998 (Tables 1 and 2; Supplementary Tables 2 and 3; Supplementary Figure 2).

To limit confounding, pregnant females and patients with incident cancer or acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)-defining events after ART start were excluded. We also excluded participants with missing CD4 (+120–30 days at ART start) or BMI information (+120/−120 days at ART start and at 1 and 4 years thereafter), those with ≥62 days of ART interruption, and injection drug users (IDUs), due to low numbers, increased rates of dropout, and missing data. A common reason for missing BMI information was ART initiation before SHCS enrollment.

Definitions and Measures
Body mass index (kg/m²) was stratified into <18.5 (underweight), 18.5–24.9 (normal), 25–29.9 (overweight), and 30 (obese), without modification for Asians [19]. Hepatitis C coinfection was defined as detectable hepatitis C virus (HCV) RNA. Smoking was stratified into ever, never, and smoking cessation during follow-up. xTC refers to ART containing either 3TC (lamivudine) or FTC (emtricitabine).

Statistical Analysis
Categorical variables were compared with χ² tests, and continuous variables were assessed with non-parametric methods (Kruskal-Wallis equality-of-populations rank test or tests for trend over calendar year, whichever was applicable). We performed bi- and multivariable linear regression analyses to investigate the effects of HIV transmission groups, age, CD4 nadir, smoking, HCV coinfection, and ART agents on BMI after ART initiation, presented as mean BMI changes (95% confidence intervals [CIs]). Antiretroviral agents are recorded with start and stop dates in the SHCS, and ART exposure was assessed at every follow-up visit.

Assumptions underlying these analyses were verified in scatter diagrams. In exploratory analyses, BMI trajectories after ART start were typically biphasic, with an initial rapid BMI gain corresponding approximately to the first year, and a smaller BMI gain during years 1–4 of ART. Therefore, subsequent detailed analyses were performed separately for years 0–1 and 1–4 of ART. Multivariable linear regression models for BMI change during year 1 were adjusted for BMI after 1 year of ART and pegylated interferon treatment. Antiretroviral treatment exposure was considered in 3 ways: most frequent ART regimens (Table 2; Supplementary Table 2), nucleoside reverse-transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI) backbones (Supplementary Table 3), and third agents (Supplementary Table 3), each defined as being administered during ≥50% of the respective time periods (years 0–1 and 1–4). Antiretroviral treatment regimens with <50 person-years of exposure were summarized in an “other” category.

Based on multivariable linear regression analyses, we made standardized predictions of mean BMI changes [kg/m² per year] for different HIV transmission categories (men who have sex with men [MSM], male heterosexual, female heterosexual), for different ethnicities (white, black, Asian), and different age groups (30–40, 41–50, 50+ years). For predictions, we fixed the remaining variables CD4 at 200–350 cells/µL, smoking status at never smoking, and baseline BMI at 22 kg/m². Interactions between BMI changes and ART, transmission groups, and ethnicity were analyzed with a likelihood ratio test. We performed sensitivity analyses adjusting for calendar periods (2003–2005, 2006–2008, and 2009 and after). All analyses were done using Stata (version 13.1; StataCorp, College Station, TX).

RESULTS

Population BMI Trends, 1990–2012
The BMI distribution in the entire SHCS population stratified by calendar year is shown in Figure 1 and Supplementary Figure 1, respectively. From 1990 to 2012, the percentage of normal weight and underweight participants decreased. Median BMI and the percentage of obese and overweight participants increased (Figure 1; Supplementary Table 1). In 2012, the median BMI was 24 kg/m² (interquartile range, 22–27), and 57% (95% CI, 56%–58%) of the population were normal weight, 4.3% (3.9–4.7) were underweight, 29% (28–30) were overweight, and 9.3% (8.6–9.9)
were obese. From 1990 to 2012, the percentage of white participants ($P < .001$), IDUs ($P < .001$), and participants with AIDS-defining illnesses decreased ($P < .001$). The percentage of women ($P = .03$), participants on ART ($P < .001$), the median CD4 cell count at ART initiation ($P < .001$), and the median age of participants increased ($P < .001$).

**Fig. 1.** Longitudinal trends of population body mass index (BMI) categories and median BMI trajectory, entire Swiss HIV Cohort Study population, 1990–2012. Note: Confidence intervals are omitted for visual clarity. Abbreviations: AIDS, acquired immune deficiency syndrome; IDU, injection drug user; ART, antiretroviral therapy.

**Table 1.** Baseline Characteristics of 1601 SHCS Participants Who Started a First ART Regimen After January 1, 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>MSM*</th>
<th>Heterosexual male</th>
<th>Heterosexual female</th>
<th>$P$-value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants, n (%)</td>
<td>1601 (100)</td>
<td>892 (56)</td>
<td>390 (24)</td>
<td>319 (19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age, median years (IQR)</td>
<td>40 (34–47)</td>
<td>40 (34–45)</td>
<td>44 (36–53)</td>
<td>37 (32–45)</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, n (%)</td>
<td>1280 (80)</td>
<td>808 (91)</td>
<td>315 (81)</td>
<td>157 (49)</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, n (%)</td>
<td>181 (11)</td>
<td>10 (1)</td>
<td>65 (17)</td>
<td>106 (33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, n (%)</td>
<td>83 (5)</td>
<td>38 (4)</td>
<td>4 (1)</td>
<td>41 (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, n (%)</td>
<td>57 (4)</td>
<td>36 (4)</td>
<td>6 (2)</td>
<td>15 (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking ever, n (%)</td>
<td>613 (38)</td>
<td>377 (42)</td>
<td>149 (38)</td>
<td>87 (27)</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCV coinfection, n (%)</td>
<td>21 (1)</td>
<td>7 (1)</td>
<td>9 (2)</td>
<td>5 (2)</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD4 nadir, cells/µL, median (IQR)</td>
<td>217 (131–289)</td>
<td>235 (161–305)</td>
<td>199 (103–271)</td>
<td>194 (93–265)</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV-RNA at start of ART, log10 copies/mL</td>
<td>4.8 (4.2–5.4)</td>
<td>4.9 (4.3–5.3)</td>
<td>4.9 (4.2–5.5)</td>
<td>4.7 (4.0–5.3)</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations: ART, antiretroviral therapy; HIV, human immunodeficiency virus; IQR, interquartile range; MSM, men who have sex with men; SD; standard deviation; SHCS, Swiss HIV Cohort Study.
* MSM are compared with heterosexual males and females.
Table 2. Bi- and Multivariable Linear Regression of BMI Changes During Year 0–1 and Years 1–4 of ART Among 1601 SHCS Participants Who Started a First ART Regimen After January 1, 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates</th>
<th>Year 0-1 of ART</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Year 1–4 of ART</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient Bivariable models (95% CI)</td>
<td></td>
<td>P Value</td>
<td>Coefficient Multivariable Models (95% CI)</td>
<td></td>
<td>P Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline BMI</td>
<td>−0.09 (−.11 to .07)</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>−0.09 (−.11 to .06)</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta BMI change, first year of ART</td>
<td>− – – – –</td>
<td>– – – – –</td>
<td>−0.05 (−.07 to .03)</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>−0.06 (−.07 to .04)</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV transmission group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSM</td>
<td>1 – 1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 – 1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Het male</td>
<td>0.46 (.24 to .68)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>0.20 (−.02 to .42)</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>0.06 (−.02 to .13)</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Het female</td>
<td>0.18 (−.06 to .41)</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>0.07 (−.18 to .32)</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>0.05 (−.03 to .13)</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age per 10 years</td>
<td>0.25 (.16 to .34)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>0.15 (−.06 to .24)</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>0.01 (−.02 to .04)</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1 – 1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 – 1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.04 (−.25 to .33)</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>−0.05 (−.36 to .26)</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>0.26 (−.16 to .35)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>−0.60 (−1.0 to −.18)</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>−0.79 (−1.2 to −.39)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>−0.01 (−.15 to .13)</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>−0.44 (−.93 to .05)</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>−0.25 (−.71 to .21)</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>−0.01 (−.17 to .15)</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD4 nadir</td>
<td>1 – 1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 – 1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0–99 cells/µL</td>
<td>1.73 (1.45 to 2.02)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>1.64 (1.4 to 1.9)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>0.40 (−.14 to .66)</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100–199 cells/µL</td>
<td>0.50 (.24 to .76)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>0.46 (.19 to .72)</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>−0.04 (−.16 to .07)</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200–349 cells/µL</td>
<td>−0.00 (−.21 to .21)</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>−0.02 (−.23 to .19)</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>0.04 (−.03 to .11)</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥500 cells/µL</td>
<td>1 – 1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 – 1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking, ever</td>
<td>−0.46 (−.65 to −.27)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>−0.29 (−.47 to −.11)</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>−0.04 (−.10 to .02)</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking cessation</td>
<td>−0.11 (−.78 to .56)</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>– – – –</td>
<td>.15 (−.03 to .26)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>0.16 (−.04 to .27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCV coinflection</td>
<td>−0.73 (−1.5 to .06)</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>– – – –</td>
<td>−0.26 (−.46 to −.06)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peginf</td>
<td>0.56 (−3.1 to 4.2)</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>– – – –</td>
<td>−0.72 (−1.1 to −.37)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>−0.71 (−1.0 to −.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most frequent ART regimens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDF, xTC, EFV</td>
<td>1 – 1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 – 1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC, xTC, EFV</td>
<td>0.27 (−.20 to .75)</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>0.21 (−.23 to .64)</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>−0.01 (−.16 to .15)</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC, xTC, LPV</td>
<td>0.51 (−.05 to 1.1)</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>0.22 (−.30 to .74)</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>0.14 (−.07 to .35)</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC, xTC, ATV, RTV</td>
<td>0.15 (−.50 to .80)</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>0.19 (−.41 to .79)</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>0.16 (−.04 to .36)</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZT, xTC, EFV</td>
<td>0.04 (−.30 to .39)</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>−0.13 (−.45 to .20)</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>−0.16 (−.28 to −.04)</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZT, xTC, LPV</td>
<td>0.54 (.19 to .89)</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>0.29 (−.04 to .62)</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>−0.16 (−.30 to −.02)</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZT, xTC, NFV</td>
<td>0.27 (−.27 to .80)</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>−0.09 (−.59 to .41)</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>−0.25 (−.46 to −.03)</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDF, xTC, LPV</td>
<td>0.45 (.10 to .80)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>0.30 (−.03 to .62)</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>0.08 (−.07 to .23)</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDF, xTC, NVP</td>
<td>−0.09 (−.60 to .42)</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>0.06 (−.42 to .54)</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>0.00 (−.14 to .14)</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BMI Change After ART Initiation

From January 1, 1998 to December 31, 2012, 5415 SHCS participants with MSM or heterosexual HIV transmission started a first ART regimen. Stringent inclusion criteria resulted in a substantial reduction of participants (Supplementary Figure 2). Subsequent analyses are based on 1601 participants (Table 1; Supplementary Table 2), 6250 person-years of follow-up, and 4803 BMI measurements. Median age at ART start was 40 years, 80% were white, and 19% were female. Body mass index change after ART initiation was biphasic; the mean BMI change during year 0–1 of ART was 0.92 kg/m² per year (95% CI, 0.83–1.0), and during years 1–4 was 0.31 (0.29–0.34) kg/m² per year. The mean interval between BMI determinations was 0.99 years (range, 0.43–1.5 years) between baseline and year 1 after ART start, and 2.9 years (1.7–4.2) between years 1 and 4.

Body Mass Index Change, Year 0–1 After ART Start

In the final, multivariable adjusted model, there was a trend towards larger BMI gain in heterosexual males compared with white participants (0.17–1.8) kg/m² per year; P = .018), compared with efavirenz (Supplementary Table 3). These multivariable associations remained unchanged after adjustment for calendar period. No significant interactions were detected between BMI changes and ART, transmission groups, and ethnicity.

Body Mass Index Changes, Years 1–4 After ART Start

In the final, multivariable adjusted model, BMI change was similar in heterosexual males (0.02 [95% CI, −0.05 to 0.10] kg/m² per year; P = .53) and females (−0.03 [−0.11 to 0.06] kg/m² per year; P = .52) compared with MSM. No age effect on BMI change was identified during years 1–4 (0.02 [−0.01 to 0.05] kg/m² per year; P = .14). Body mass index gain was larger in black compared with white participants (0.28 [0.16–0.37] kg/m² per year; P < .001). Body mass index change was also associated with CD4 nadir 0–99 cells/µL (0.44 [0.19–0.70] kg/m² per year; P = .001) compared to CD4 nadir >350 cells/µL, with smoking cessation (0.16 [0.04–0.27] kg/m² per year; P = .006) and with pegylated interferon (−0.71 [−1.0 to −0.37] kg/m² per year; P < .001). Compared to calendar period 1998–2002, BMI change was similar in 2003–2005 (P = .57), but it increased in 2006–2008 (0.12 [0.03–0.21] kg/m²; P = .008) and in 2009 and after (0.19 [0.09–0.28] kg/m² per year; P < .001). No significant interactions were detected between BMI changes and ART, transmission groups, and ethnicity. Body mass index change was similar for the 10 most commonly prescribed ART regimens (Table 2). As regards NRTIs and third agents (Supplementary Table 3), compared with tenofovir/xTC and efavirenz, zidovudine was associated with a smaller BMI increase, in combination with either efavirenz/xTC (−0.17 [−0.29 to −0.05] kg/m² per year; P = .006) or with nelfinavir/
been recorded in HIV+ populations [11, 13, 23, 27], and the per-
HIV+ population that is in much better health [23]. Advancing
associated weight loss. Successful ART has produced an aging
society [14, 15, 17, 24]. Age is an important contributor to BMI in the general popula-
tion [32]. This study has 3 major findings; first, obesity rates in the SHCS have been increasing since 1995 in the setting of demographic changes, earlier ART start, and more widespread population ART coverage; second, BMI increase after ART initiation typically was biphasic, and the BMI increase in year 0–1 was as large as the increase in years 1–4 combined and was related most no-
tably to the CD4 nadir; and third, we found little evidence that the individual ART regimen selected is a major driver of the ex-
tent of BMI change after ART start.

We describe a number of changes in demographics and in HIV management that may be partially responsible for the in-
creasing obesity prevalence in the entire SHCS population over time, including an aging population, fewer IDU, initiation of ART at higher CD4 counts, and increasingly complete ART coverage. Injection drug use has been associated with lower BMI, more weight loss, and less weight gain after ART start, compared with other HIV+ persons [20], but not in all studies [11]. Before ART start, BMI typically declines with advanced HIV infection [21] and may predict survival and progression to AIDS [22]. In contrast, earlier ART start in recent years may prevent opportunistic complications, wasting, and the asso-
ciated weight loss. Successful ART has produced an aging HIV+ population that is in much better health [23]. Advancing
age is an important contributor to BMI in the general popula-
tion [14, 15, 17, 24–26]. Increasing obesity rates have previously been recorded in HIV+ populations [11, 13, 23, 27], and the per-
centages of normal weight, underweight and overweight persons in the SHCS in 2012 was very similar to the percentages reported in the Swiss general population in 2012 [28]. Our study represents the most comprehensive assessment of longitudinal BMI change after ART start to date. In detailed analyses, we found BMI change after ART initiation to be a bi-
phasic process that included a mean increase during the first
year of ART that was as large as the mean increase during the 3 subsequent years combined. A biphasic BMI behavior has not previously been described; it likely represents a rapid re-gain of

DISCUSSION

This study has 3 major findings; first, obesity rates in the SHCS have been increasing since 1995 in the setting of demographic changes, earlier ART start, and more widespread population ART coverage; second, BMI increase after ART initiation typically was biphasic, and the BMI increase in year 0–1 was as large as the increase in years 1–4 combined and was related most no-
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tent of BMI change after ART start.

We describe a number of changes in demographics and in HIV management that may be partially responsible for the in-
creasing obesity prevalence in the entire SHCS population over time, including an aging population, fewer IDU, initiation of ART at higher CD4 counts, and increasingly complete ART coverage. Injection drug use has been associated with lower BMI, more weight loss, and less weight gain after ART start, compared with other HIV+ persons [20], but not in all studies [11]. Before ART start, BMI typically declines with advanced HIV infection [21] and may predict survival and progression to AIDS [22]. In contrast, earlier ART start in recent years may prevent opportunistic complications, wasting, and the asso-
ciated weight loss. Successful ART has produced an aging HIV+ population that is in much better health [23]. Advancing
age is an important contributor to BMI in the general popula-
tion [14, 15, 17, 24–26]. Increasing obesity rates have previously been recorded in HIV+ populations [11, 13, 23, 27], and the per-
centages of normal weight, underweight and overweight persons in the SHCS in 2012 was very similar to the percentages reported in the Swiss general population in 2012 [28]. Our study represents the most comprehensive assessment of longitudinal BMI change after ART start to date. In detailed analyses, we found BMI change after ART initiation to be a bi-
phasic process that included a mean increase during the first
year of ART that was as large as the mean increase during the 3 subsequent years combined. A biphasic BMI behavior has not previously been described; it likely represents a rapid re-gain of
Fig. 2. Adjusted predicted annualized body mass index (BMI) changes during years 0–1 and years 1–4 of ART start. Separate predictions of BMI changes/year are presented for human immunodeficiency virus transmission category, gender, ethnicity, and age groups. Results are based on multivariable regression models adjusted for transmission category, ethnicity, age group, CD4 categories, and smoking status. For predictions, we fixed the remaining variables CD4 at 200–350, never smoking, and baseline BMI of 22 kg/m². Abbreviations: hetero, heterosexual; MSM, men who have sex with men.
Strengths of this study include longitudinal data collection in an established, large observational study. Due to the prospective design of the SHCS, we were able to control for important co-factors. Limitations include that information on diet and certain psychiatric co-medications potentially associated with weight gain are not yet systematically captured; alcohol use and physical activity has been recorded since 2009 and was not considered in the present study. Moreover, the SHCS does not collect information on poverty, an important social determinant of BMI change.

In conclusion, increasing obesity rates in the SHCS population have occurred at the same time as trends towards restoration of health and normal aging in the setting of increasingly widespread population ART coverage. Ethnicity and immune suppression (CD4 nadir) had important effects on BMI behavior after ART start, but there was no clear evidence that frequently used ART regimens differ in their influence on BMI change during 4 years of follow-up. Similar to the general population, HIV+ patients should be motivated to consider a healthy lifestyle including diet, exercise, and behavioral modifications.

Author Contributions

P. E. T. and M. I. designed the study. B. L. analyzed the data. B. H. and M. I. wrote the first draft, and B. H., M. I., B. L., and P. E. T. wrote the final version of the manuscript. All investigators contributed to data collection and interpretation of the data, reviewed drafts of the manuscript, and approved the final manuscript.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary material is available online at Open Forum Infectious Diseases (http://OpenForumInfectiousDiseases.oxfordjournals.org/).

Acknowledgments


Financial support. This study was financed within the framework of the Swiss HIV Cohort Study (Study no. 627), supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (grant no. 134277).

Potential conflicts of interest. B. H. has received travel grants from Essex Chemicals, Wyeth, Astra Zeneca, and Janssen. B. L. has received travel grants, grants, or honoraria from Abbott, Aventis, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Gilead, GlaxoSmithKline, Merck Sharp & Dohme, Roche, and Tibotec. E. B. has received travel grants, grants, and honoraria from Abbott, BMS, Boehringer Ingelheim, Gilead Sciences, Janssen, MSD, and Viiv. A. C. received travel grants from Boehringer Ingelheim and received unrestricted educational grants from Janssen Cilag, Gilead, MSD, Viiv, BMS, and AbbVie. P. E. T.’s institution has received advisory fees from MSD and honoraria from Viiv. All authors have submitted the ICMJE Form for Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest. Conflicts that the editors consider relevant to the content of the manuscript have been disclosed.

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