

Scientists make HIV strain that can infect monkeys

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true



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Photograph by: Eliseo Fernandez, Reuters

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Scientists have created a strain of the human AIDS virus able to infect and multiply in monkeys in a step toward testing future vaccines in monkeys before trying them in people, according to a new study.

This strain of HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus, was developed by altering a single gene in the human version to allow it to infect a type of monkey called a pig-tailed macaque, the researchers said on Monday.

The genetically engineered virus, once injected into this monkey, proliferates almost as much as it does in people, but the animal ultimately suppresses it and the virus does not make it sick, they said.

The strain is called simian-tropic HIV-1, or stHIV-1.

Researchers hope to be able to test possible new AIDS drugs and vaccines in monkeys before trying them in people.

There is a "cousin" virus to HIV called SIV, or simian immunodeficiency virus, that causes a disease similar to AIDS in certain types of monkeys.

But this monkey AIDS virus is not identical to the one that infects people and is not a perfect substitute for testing drugs and vaccines against HIV.