

How AIDS transformed genetic engineering

For two decades, [Matt] Sharp had been living with HIV. He'd watched the height of the aids crisis claim dozens of his friends' and lovers' lives. Now, he believed he was taking a step toward a cure.

A few months earlier, researchers had drawn white blood cells from Sharp's body and manipulated his DNA with tiny molecules, deleting a single gene in each cell. He was about to receive an infusion that would reintroduce the tweaked cells back into his bloodstream. The procedure aimed to change the genetic makeup of these cells to make Sharp's body resistant to HIV.

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Over the past decade, HIV patients like Sharp have played a major role in pushing forward the vanguard science of gene editing. The community's [close-knit advocacy networks](#), paired with the fact that there are clearly identifiable genes that make humans vulnerable to HIV, have made people living with the virus ready candidates for innovative—though sometimes risky—experiments.

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HIV patients have voluntarily participated in scientifically condoned experiments that have paved the way for further gene-editing work on, for instance, [cancer](#) and blindness.

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Sharp found long-term improvements to his immune-system health. He thinks participation in the study was worth it, but he still takes daily pills to keep the virus under control.

Read full, original post: [The Man Who Smelled Like Rancid Creamed Corn to Usher In a New Scientific Era](#)