Pathological Clotting and Deep Vein Thrombosis in Patients with HIV

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Abstract

The number of people infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is rapidly increasing and the majority of those infected are living in sub-Saharan Africa. Some hallmarks of HIV are inflammation and upregulation of inflammatory markers. A pathological coagulation system may accompany these inflammatory changes and potentially result in venous thromboembolism such as a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). In this review, the authors describe the inflammatory profile in HIV, the treatment regimens currently in place in South Africa, and in particular how HIV affects the hematological system, with specific focus on platelets, red blood cells (RBCs; erythrocytes), and fibrin(ogen). They also discuss the presence of DVT in HIV, focus on screening tests, and suggest a more proactive approach to track the inflammatory profile of HIV patients, by specifically using parameters that might point to pathological coagulation; these should involve platelet, RBC, and fibrin(ogen) analysis. They conclude by suggesting that including coagulation function tests to study the effect of treatment interventions would improve outcomes in these individuals, as it could help in the diagnosis of thromboembolic disease. Furthermore, this approach could streamline treatment strategies due to improved monitoring. A better understanding of hypercoagulability of HIV-infected patients is therefore urgently needed. In conclusion, the authors suggest a panel of pathology tests that should be considered as standard procedures when HIV is present.

Keywords: human immunodeficiency virus - deep vein thrombosis - antiretroviral medication - inflammation - coagulation

The number of people recorded with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection is over 70 million and half of this population have already died. The mortality from HIV-related illnesses in 2016 alone was at 1 million people.[1] Sub-Saharan Africa has just under 21 million people infected with HIV, which therefore comprises nearly 60% of the worldwide cases.[2] New HIV infections are ~2.6 million per year globally.[3] HIV is a retrovirus that targets the immune system and primarily destroys and functionally impairs T lymphocyte cells and monocytes/macrophages.[4] [5] Furthermore, the viral replication and the antigenic stimulation by the virus stimulates host inflammatory responses,[4] [5] resulting in an upregulation of circulating proinflammatory cytokine concentrations. These inflammatory cytokines include well-studied biomarkers like interleukin-6 (IL-6), IL-1β and tumor necrosis
factor-α (TNFα). One of the hallmarks of inflammation (which include a pathological circulating inflammatory marker profile) is a hypercoagulable state, and an increased propensity for abnormal clotting or thromboembolic events, like deep vein thrombosis (DVT). As HIV infection is associated with inflammation, as well as DVT and pathological clotting propensity, the focus of this review is to discuss the inflammatory HIV patient profile, how medication affects the occurrence of the hypercoagulable state, and how to address these events. The next few paragraphs will give a general overview of HIV, including various classifications, followed by a review of the literature on DVT and the abnormal clotting propensity during HIV infection.

**HIV and Its Classification**

An untreated HIV infection results in an exhausted and weakened immune system. The deteriorating immune system is reflected by the low CD4+ (T lymphocyte) count and an increased risk of opportunistic infections. The World Health Organization (WHO) immunological classification of HIV-infected patients is depicted in Table 1, according to the absolute number of CD4+ lymphocytes (per mm$^3$). Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is the term used for the severely immunocompromised patients.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIV immunodeficiency classification</th>
<th>CD4+ cells (per mm$^3$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonsignificant</td>
<td>Greater than 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>Between 350 and 499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Between 200 and 349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>Lower than 200</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


In 2007, the WHO published a clinical staging system of HIV/AIDS. The clinical criteria are divided into four stages. Asymptomatic patients are classified as stage 1. Those presenting with mild clinical features are classified as stage 2. Stage 3 represents advanced symptoms and Stage 4 represents severe symptoms. Stages 3 and 4 are associated with advanced HIV infection (see Table 2). From stage 2 onward, inflammation and a pathological inflammatory marker profile are predominant characteristics in all the concurrent conditions listed in Table 2.
Table 2 WHO clinical staging of HIV/AIDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical stage 1</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asymptomatic with/without persistent generalized lymphadenopathy</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical stage 2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recurrent respiratory tract infections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;10% weight loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herpes zoster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recurrent oral ulceration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angular cheilitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papular pruritic eruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fungal nail infections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seborrheic dermatitis</td>
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<tr>
<th>Clinical stage 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 10% weight loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than a month’s duration of unknown cause of chronic diarrhea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent fever of unknown cause &gt;1 mo (temperature &gt;37.6°C)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral hairy leukoplakia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persistent oral candidiasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulmonary tuberculosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute necrotizing ulcerative stomatitis, gingivitis, or periodontitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe bacterial infections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained anemia, thrombocytopenia, or neutropenia</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clinical stage 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pneumocystis pneumonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV-related wasting syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe recurrent bacterial pneumonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infection with chronic herpes simplex &gt;1 mo (oralabial, genital or viscera, or anorectal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oesophageal or airway candida infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaposi’s sarcoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrapulmonary tuberculosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cytomegalovirus infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV encephalopathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toxoplasmosis of the central nervous system</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extrapulmonary Cryptococcus infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive multifocal leuкоencephalopathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disseminated nontuberculous mycobacterial infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic cryptosporidiosis (with diarrhea)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disseminated mycosis (coccidioidomycosis or histoplasmosis)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chronic isosporiasis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recurrent nontyphoidal Salmonella bacteremia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lymphoma or other solid HIV-associated tumors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atypical disseminated leishmaniasis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invasive cervical carcinoma</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV-associated nephropathy or cardiomyopathy that is symptomatic</td>
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HIV Prevalence and Antiretroviral Usage in South Africa

The prevalence of HIV in South Africa, as well as worldwide, has escalated the already overwhelming influx of patients into hospitals. Highly effective antiretroviral (ARV) therapy combinations were introduced around 1995. In South Africa, there are multiple classes of ARVs available (see Table 3). First-line ARV regimen, as recommended by the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society and conforming with international guidelines, includes the combination of two nucleoside/nucleotide reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTI) and a nonnucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NNRTI). The following combinations are recommended:

- Lamivudine (3TC) with tenofovir (TDF), zidovudine (AZT), or abacavir (ABC).
- Emtricitabine (FTC) with tenofovir in a fixed-dose combination or with the addition of efavirenz as a combined pill.

In Pretoria (South Africa), the first-line ARV regimen combination most frequently used is efavirenz (NNRTI), emtricitabine (NRTI), and tenofovir (NRTI). ARVs suppress HIV replication, but have also multiple side effects, specifically the NRTIs and the protease inhibitors (PIs). The most common side effects include lactic acidosis, pancreatitis, hypersensitivity reactions, and cardiovascular abnormalities. ARVs have been associated with coagulation abnormalities in HIV-positive patients (see Table 4). NRTI with NNRTI regimen, and the NRTI with PIs regimen have demonstrated decreased concentrations of endothelial markers (von Willebrand factor [VWF], soluble vascular adhesion molecule 1 [sVCAM-1], and soluble intercellular adhesion molecule 1 [sICAM-1]).

The next few paragraphs will discuss in more detail the physiological reasons for these coagulation abnormalities.
Circulating Inflammatory Markers and Their Effects on the Hematological System

As mentioned in the introduction, inflammation is one of the hallmarks of a hypercoagulable state. A hypercoagulable state can be considered as a condition where the components of coagulation are increased/activated and/or the anticoagulation pathways impaired/inactivated resulting in a hematological system that is prone to thromboembolism. Hypercoagulable conditions include protein C deficiency, antiphospholipid syndrome, increased VWF, and malignancy. Coagulation abnormalities are clinically measured by plasma-based, activated partial thromboplastin time (aPTT), and prothrombin time (PT), as sometimes converted to an international normalized ratio (INR) as well as whole blood (viscoelastic tests) based coagulation tests. A combination of these tests is usually performed as there are limitations of each test (see Table 5).

Platelets are important role players in a hypercoagulable state during inflammation and their activation occurs in three stages (initiation, extension, and perturbation). Besides hemostasis, platelets also appear to have a role in the immune system. Low-grade inflammatory conditions are associated with a high mean platelet volume (MPV). Platelets can also be classified as natural inflammatory cells. They have the ability to aggregate/gather around microorganisms, and to assist with the removal from the blood. In the presence of infection, platelets become activated and their production is increased by certain inflammatory mediators, such as IL-6. Platelets aggregate with leukocytes in areas of ischemia/reperfusion injury. The activated platelets interact with and signal to...
other inflammatory cells, such as leukocytes, and release their granules in high concentrations. Between 0.26 and 7.6% of HIV-infected patients will have venous thromboembolism (VTE) and activated platelets have been suggested as the etiology.[28]

Several chemokines are stored in very significant amounts in α granules in the platelet cytoplasm and they possess virucidal and suppressive activity against HIV.[30] Activated platelets release cytokines such as IL-1-β, IL-7, IL-8, platelet activating factor (PAF), and transforming growth factor (TGF)-β.[28] The chemokines released, activate leukocytes, specifically neutrophils and monocytes. P-selectin, a cell adhesion molecule whose surface expression is mediated by thrombin, appears on activated platelets, thereby increasing the platelet’s adhesion to endothelial cells and to neutrophils. Activated platelets release a proinflammatory-mediator CD40 ligand, which induces the production of IL-6, IL-8, and the synthesis of tissue factor (TF).[27] Platelets therefore play a role in surveillance and amplifying the immune response during viral infections. However, platelets and cytokines, such as IL-18, can also cause dysregulation of the immune response to HIV.[28]

Platelets attach to the actual HIV virus, via two receptors, fibronectin and chemokine receptor type 4 (CXCR4), a fundamental coreceptor required for the virus to enter into cells. Activated platelets can then endocytose the HIV virus. P-selectin is then expressed on the platelet membrane surface, which can activate surrounding macrophages. This leads to enhanced viral clearance by the activated macrophages.[31] On the other hand, platelets can also enhance the spread of the virus. Platelets attached to HIV can infect CD4+ cells directly or endocytose and deliver the viral particles elsewhere in the body.[28]

Thrombocytopenia (defined here as a platelet count of less than 100 × 10⁹/L) is a common manifestation of HIV infection. Severe thrombocytopenia is classified as less than 50 × 10⁹/L, and there is a high risk for spontaneous bleeding below 10 × 10⁹/L.[30] Thrombocytopenia in the presence of HIV can be caused by megakaryocyte infection by the HIV virus in the bone marrow, bone marrow infiltration from opportunistic infections or lymphoma, hypersplenism, myelosuppressive effects of medications, or by immune-mediated peripheral platelet-specific antiglycoprotein antibodies.[28] Thrombocytopenia can occur when the glycoproteins on the platelet membrane surface are targeted by the antibodies that are supposed to be directed toward the viral glycoproteins.[30] The platelet–leucocyte interaction can result in aggregates different from the usual platelet aggregates that may affect hemostasis. This platelet–leucocyte interaction has not been visualized in detail previously.[32] [33] Another mechanism resulting in thrombocytopenia is the increased inflammatory markers. It is well known that circulating inflammatory markers have a pronounced pathological effect on platelet structure and function.[34] [35] [36] [37] [38] [39] [40] The usual morphology of activated platelets is characterized by membrane blebbing, platelet spreading, and extensive pseudopodia formation.[36] These ultrastructural changes have been documented in disease (e.g., asthma, cancer, thrombotic disease, bleeding disorders) and aging.[41] In the presence of increased circulating inflammatory markers, platelets present with irregular, disrupted membranes with shedding of procoagulant vesicles. These morphological features are suggestive of platelet apoptosis, cell death.[34] [35] [36] [37] [38] [39] [40] HIV infection has also been associated with similar morphological features.[42] Platelet destruction is predominant early in the HIV disease course, whereas decreased platelet production is the main cause later in the disease course.[43]

Antiretroviral therapy usually improves HIV-related thrombocytopenia, but the effect may not be the same for all HIV-infected patients.[28] Before ARVs, the prevalence of HIV-
associated thrombocytopenia was 5 to 30%, but with ARVs the prevalence is now 3.2%. HIV-infected patients may, however, have an increased risk of bleeding with ARVs, which indicates that ARVs, or the different combinations of ARVs, alter the nature of the observed thrombocytopenia.[30] Zidovudine, NRTI, results in resolution of 24 to 34% of HIV-associated thrombocytopenia and a partial response in 33 to 44%. Didanosine commonly results in a rise in the platelet concentration. Protease inhibitors (PIs) are generally associated with an increased rate of thrombosis; however, increased bleeding risks have also been documented.[30]

A study of four HIV-infected patients using scanning electron microscopy (SEM) was reported in 2008 by the University of Pretoria which examined the ultrastructural changes of platelet aggregates. There were areas of intact membranes adjacent to membrane blebbing with areas where the membrane was torn compared with the control platelet aggregates, which showed smooth membranes. Both HIV-positive and HIV-negative platelet aggregates had pseudopodia and openings of the open canalicular system channels. HIV-infected patients therefore have platelet aggregates that appear apoptotic, which could be due to direct viral damage or to patient antibody cross-reaction.[42] Not much research has been documented on the platelet ultrastructure in HIV patients while on ARV therapy. One study looked at the morphology of platelets with the use of an immunomodulator, Canova (manufactured by Canova do Brazil), in HIV patients. Canova is a herbal drug that augments the activation of the patient's immune system. Patients treated with Canova had intact platelet morphology, including decreased platelet membrane blebbing and intact smooth membranes. The findings suggest that the use of Canova prevents the destructive effects of the virus.[44] The effects of ARVs may show similar effects on platelet ultrastructure as Canova.

Platelets are also influenced by physical and chemical properties of red blood cells (RBCs). If damaged, RBCs can release adenosine diphosphate (ADP) and therefore exert prothrombotic properties by activating platelets. Damaged RBCs may stimulate platelet granule release, which will recruit additional platelets into the developing thrombus. The interaction between platelets and RBCs is initiated by platelet activation. As the platelets become activated, the coagulation pathways are stimulated resulting in the fibrin network trapping more platelets and RBCs. The interaction of activated platelets with RBCs therefore has a positive feedback on the coagulation system.[45]

Fibrinogen expresses binding sites for the membrane receptors of cells involved in inflammation, and enhances adhesion of the RBCs, by binding to the RBC membrane.[45] RBC aggregation thereby increases in the localized presence of fibrinogen. Fibrinogen, arguably one of the most important circulating plasma proteins, is a large centrosymmetric glycoprotein. Thrombin cleaves the fibrinogen molecules and thereby releasing fibrinopeptides A and B. Fibrinopeptide A is an early indicator of fibrin formation. Cleavage of the fibrinopeptides allows fibrin monomers to attach forming protofibrils. Bundles of protofibrils form the insoluble fibrin fibers.[27] [46] [47] The fibrin clot consists of thick fibers which form the majority of the clot, and thin minor fibers which are arranged among the major fibers.[48] The thickness of the fibrin fibers appears to be influenced by thrombin concentration.[32] Antithrombin inactivates thrombin and proteolysis of the fibrin fibers into soluble degradation products occurs in the presence of plasmin.[26]

The nature of the clot can be influenced by changes in the concentration of fibrinogen; a higher concentration of fibrinogen will lead rapid clot formation with decreased spaces between the fibrin strands. Clot characteristics can also be influenced by fibrinogen amino
acid sequence changes and divalent cations (e.g., iron ions), changes that interact with fibrinogen and its conversion into fibrin. Ionic strength can influence the clot pore size, as fibrinogen at a neutral pH has a negative charge. In diabetes, for example, the nature of fibrinogen can change due to glycation.[49] Hormonal changes, such as an increase in estrogen, also cause a granular fibrin network.[45]

Fibrin clot proteolysis in hypercoagulable conditions may be inhibited or delayed. The delayed/inhibited breakdown of the fibrin clot may be due to inflammatory cellular elements that are trapped in the fibrin network that stimulates a firm clot formation resistant to antithrombotic agents.[50] This resistant fibrin clot is associated with an altered fibrin network on SEM investigation.[48] In stroke patients, it was noticed that an abnormal matted fibrin network was present even without the addition of thrombin, indicating the presence of other plasma factors. In disease-free individuals, this abnormal matted fibrin network can only be recreated when thrombin is added to citrated blood.[51] A thick matted layered fibrin network is seen which is due to the increased volume of the thin minor fibrin fibers. The result is the appearance of the thick major fibers being covered by a net of thickened minor fibers. These fibrin changes are documented in patients with inflammatory or other conditions such as arthritis, asthma, and smoking.[48]

Recently, fibrin(ogen) protein has been noted to change to an amyloid-like structure, in the presence of circulating proinflammatory agents, such as iron, gram-negative bacteria lipopolysaccharides (LPS), and gram-positive bacteria lipoteichoic acids (LTA), which are soluble peptidoglycan and muropeptides.[52] This structural change involves pathology noted in the actual protein structure. Unagitated human fibrin contains 30 ± 3% α-helices, 37 ± 4% β-sheets, and 32 ± 3% loops, turns, and random coils.[53] In general, amyloid protein structure is characterized by the increased formation of β-sheets, compared with α-helices; and this is observable using X-ray reflections.[54] [55] [56] [57] [58] Recently, fluorescent amyloid markers were also used to show amyloid in pathologic fibrin clots.[52] [59] [60] As part of considerable studies on atypical blood clotting,[49] [50] [61] [62] [63] [64] [65] [66] we recently found[66] [67] that the atypical fibrin clotting was in fact amyloid in nature. Although clearly fibrin(ogen) structure is of great importance in the pathology of HIV, we could not find much literature regarding the structure and function of it in HIV.

**HIV, the Accompanying Proinflammatory State and the Development of Deep Vein Thrombosis**

Deep vein thrombosis is associated with increased concentrations of inflammatory markers, whether the patient is infected with HIV or not. Raised plasma levels of C-reactive protein (CRP), D-dimer, TNFα, IL-6, IL-8, and monocyte chemotactic protein have been found in patients with DVT, especially at the onset of DVT.[68] [69] [70] [71] Inflammation and coagulation are closely linked. Inflammation can activate coagulation by cytokine- (IL-6 and TNFα) induced TF expression, downregulating protein C and inhibiting fibrinolysis. Conversely, coagulation factors and products (thrombin and fibrin) can also activate inflammation.[71] [72] The proinflammatory state in HIV-infected patients, with upregulated cytokines and other inflammatory molecules present in the blood,[73] [74] [75] [76] [77] [78] [79] [80] [81] [82] [83] [84] is therefore strongly associated with DVT formation. However, the medical treatment of DVT remains the same for HIV-infected and HIV-negative patients.[85] The elevated inflammatory markers in the plasma are therefore a good measuring tool to assess inflammation in HIV-infected patients.
Screening for a hypercoagulable state in HIV patients that may develop a DVT is not usually performed, unless the patient presents with a symptomatic VTE disease. However, prophylactic DVT screening and/or early detection of a DVT in HIV-infected patients would improve patient care and decrease morbidity and mortality. A better understanding of hypercoagulability will therefore result in improved patient care in HIV-infected patients.

Up to 30% of general surgery patients may develop a symptomatic or nonsymptomatic DVT.[86] A systematic review of HIV-positive patients in 2005 found a DVT incidence ranging from 0.19 to 18%, whereas in the HIV-negative population the DVT risk is reported to be approximately 0.0005% (5/10,000).[87] Up to 40% of patients with DVT can develop PE.[88]

Patients with HIV are more prone to a hypercoagulable state compared with HIV-negative patients. Factors (Virchow's triad) predisposing to a procoagulable state have been documented in HIV-infected patients such as increased antiphospholipid antibodies, lupus anticoagulant, VWF, and D-dimers. Deficiencies include proteins C and S, heparin cofactor II, and antithrombin.[89]

Elevated concentrations of activated platelets (raised levels of P-selectin, microparticles, and aminophospholipids) are present in HIV-positive patients. With the addition of elevated levels of VWF, these activated platelets easily aggregate and adhere to each other and the surrounding endothelium.[87] There is a positive correlation; the more severe the viral immune suppression, the more severe the coagulation abnormalities. The risk of thrombosis can therefore also occur in uncommon sites and in those patients who do not have known risk factors for DVT.[14]

**Conclusion**

Although there are adequate tests available for screening for DVTs when this is already suspected by the clinician, a more proactive approach is needed to track the inflammatory profile, and specifically the parameters that might point to pathological coagulation; and these should include platelet, RBC, and fibrin(ogen) analysis. Hypercoagulable changes are present in the body long before an actual thromboembolic event occurs. Using techniques to study fibrin(ogen), as a marker of coagulation, might also be of great value. The importance of the investigations into the molecular and fiber-level origins of hypercoagulability has only recently been realized. Platelet ultrastructure in HIV-positive patients has shown differences compared with HIV-negative patients, but previous study samples have been small. Besides the morphology and ultrastructure of platelets and fibrin, the interaction of activated platelets with fibrin, as well as the interactions with red blood cells and white blood cells, could have important implications of hypercoagulability. Ultrastructural investigation should be used as a complementary investigation with the tests more commonly used for diagnosing coagulation abnormalities. This will result in a more complete method of understanding and diagnosing hypercoagulability and hypofibrinolysis. A predictive screening assessment of HIV-infected patients could then possibly be determined for those at risk of a thromboembolic event, including DVT. Additional tests would greatly improve understanding of the effect of ARVs on fibrin(ogen) structure as well as platelet and RBC functioning during coagulation. We suggest a panel of tests (shown in [Table 6]) that could be included. Although some of the equipment/tests are traditionally seen as more research orientated (e.g., SEM), there are desk-top machines available. Thromboelastography (TEG) is also currently used as point-of-care instruments. Multiplex panels like a V-PLEX Vascular
Injury Panel could also be used as a standard biomarker test. Such panels typically measure four biomarkers like serum amyloid A, CRP, VCAM-1, and ICAM-1 that are important in acute inflammation and tissue damage as well as numerous other biological processes.

Table 6 Proposed tests that could be included as standard tests during HIV/AIDS hospital visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hematological markers</th>
<th>Traditional coagulation tests</th>
<th>Global coagulation tests</th>
<th>Ultrastructural tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full blood count (especially platelet count and mean platelet volume)</td>
<td>PT/INR&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Viscoclastic tests (TEG/ROTEM/Sonodot instruments) and/or thrombin generation assay and/or clot waveform analysis</td>
<td>Scanning electron microscopy (desktop type)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultrasensitive CRP</td>
<td>aPTT</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fibrinogen concentration</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-dimer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biomarker multiplex panels; e.g., vascular injury panels</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations: aPTT, activated partial thromboplastin time; CRP, C-reactive protein; ESR, erythrocyte sedimentation rate; INR, international normalized ratio; PT, prothrombin time; TEG, rotational thromboelastometry; TEG, thromboelastography.

*These are suggested tests that we believe in time will help develop a better understanding of the pathophysiology of HIV, especially as related to derangements in hemostasis. We recognize that the evidence base for usage in this setting is currently limited.

*These tests are generally utilized in research studies, but are increasingly being developed for use in clinical investigations.

The INR is intended for monitoring of vitamin K antagonists (VKAs) and has not been validated for other assessments of hemostasis. It may be preferential to utilize a PT ratio, as has sometimes been proposed for use in end-stage liver disease for transplant evaluation. The PT ratio is simply the patient’s PT divided by the mean normal prothrombin time, as otherwise used in the INR ratio. Unlike the INR, the PT ratio does not include an adjustment with an “international sensitivity index,” as applied to VKA monitoring.

Coagulation screening methods together with vascular injury panels could be used for early diagnoses of thromboembolic disease in HIV patients and could greatly impact to streamline treatment strategies due to improved monitoring of those strategies. It will also give insight into the general inflammatory status of the patients, and will not only track disease progression but also give insights into medication compliance and the effect of treatment regimes. A better understanding of hypercoagulability of HIV-infected patients is therefore urgently needed.

Conflicts of Interest

None.

Acknowledgments

We thank the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa (E Pretorius: Rated researcher grant) as well as the Medical Research Council (MRC of South Africa [E Pretorius: grant holder]) for supporting this research. The funding organizations did not have any involvement in the research. We thank Professor Taole Mokoena (Head of the department of Surgery, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria, South Africa) for his support.

Competing Interests

None.
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