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If you are only a casual follower of the trends in HIV/AIDS research, you would be forgiven for thinking that there is nothing new to say about this field.

The miraculous drugs that keep so many HIV-positive people alive have, ironically, blunted the urgency with which the press, policy makers and the general public used to talk about the epidemic.

In fact, as this *Nature Outlook* shows, there is a renaissance afoot in the field. There is, for instance, hushed talk of something most people had given up on: a cure for HIV/AIDS. With more powerful new drugs and a clearer understanding of the virus' ways, some researchers are quietly exploring approaches to flush the virus out of the body completely.

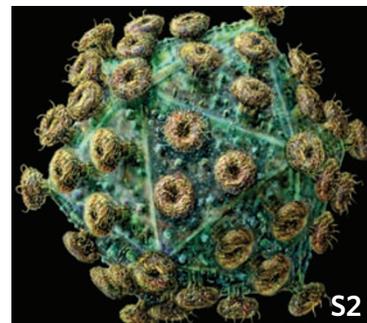
In the past few years, researchers have also made remarkable progress in understanding how HIV literally exhausts the immune system by keeping it on high alert, and how exquisitely different each individual's immune response is to the virus. Scientists are learning, slowly but surely, how to build antibodies that can neutralize the virus, and vaccines that can prevent it from infecting people in the first place.

Some of these lessons come from unexpected places — ranging from monkeys in Asia to sex workers in Africa and haemophiliacs in the United States. They are also the result, as is often the case with big advances in science, of multidisciplinary collaborations.

Outside the laboratory, too, there is new hope. Experts are combining every tool at hand — such as mobile telephones, male circumcision and microbicides laced with antiretroviral drugs — to prevent new infections. Even South Africa, that hotbed of AIDS denialism, is finally facing up to its epidemic.

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**Apoorva Mandavilli, Consultant Editor**

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