SOURCE | Baby was infected by her HIV-positive mother

Baby ‘cured’ of HIV

in trial by scientists

SOURCE | Baby was infected by her HIV-positive mother

A series of blood

tests were done by

the team, none gave

HIV-positive results

Researchers say they

have, for the first time,

cured a baby born with

HIV — a development that

could help improve treatment

of babies infected at birth.

There is an important technical

nuance: researchers insist

on calling it a “functional cure”

rather than a complete cure.

That is because the virus is

not totally eradicated. Still, its

presence is reduced to such a

low level that a body can control

it without the need for

standard drug treatment.

The only fully cured AIDS

patient recognized worldwide

is the so-called “Berlin patient,”

American Timothy Brown. He

is considered cured of HIV and

leukemia five years after receiving

bone marrow transplants

from a rare donor naturally

resistant to HIV. The marrow

transplant was aimed at treating

his leukemia.

But in this new case, the

baby girl received nothing

more invasive or complex than

commonly available antiretroviral

drugs. The difference,

however, was the dosage and

the timing: starting less than

30 hours after her birth.

It is that kind of aggressive

treatment that likely yielded

the “functional cure,” researchers

reported Sunday at the

20th annual Conference on

Retroviruses and Opportunistic

Infections (CROI) in

Atlanta, Georgia.

What researchers call

dormant HIV-infected cells

often re-start infections in

HIV-infected patients within

a few weeks after antiretroviral

treatment stops, forcing

most people who have tested

HIV-positive to stay on the

drugs for life or risk the illness

progressing.

“Prompt antiviral therapy in

newborns that begins within

days of exposure may help

infants clear the virus and

achieve long-term remission

without lifelong treatment by

preventing such viral hideouts

from forming in the first place,”

said lead researcher Deborah

Persaud, of Johns Hopkins

Children’s Center in Baltimore,

Maryland.

It appears to be the first time

this was achieved in a baby,

she said.

The baby was infected by

her HIV-positive mother, and

her treatment with therapeutic

doses of antiretroviral

drugs began even before her

own positive blood test came

back.

The typical protocol for

high-risk newborns is to give

them smaller doses of the

drugs until results from an

HIV blood test is available at

six weeks old.

Tests showed the baby’s viral

count steadily declined until it

could not longer be detected

29 days after her birth.

The child was given follow-up

treatment with antiretrovirals

until 18 months, at which point

doctors lost contact with her

for 10 months. During that

period she was not taking

antiretrovirals.

Researchers then were able

to do a series of blood tests

— and none gave an HIV-positive

result. *(AFP)*