Manifestations and Related Risk Factors of Thrombocyte Abnormalities in HIV-Positive Patients Before and After the Initiation of ART

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Background: At present, the thrombocyte abnormality is not well described before and after the initiation of antiretroviral therapy (ART). The purpose of this research is to investigate the dynamic changes and related risk factors of thrombocytopenia and thrombocytosis in HIV-infected individuals.

Methods: We performed a real-world observational study among 6637 HIV patients who started ART from January, 2013 to August, 2020 at the Beijing Ditan Hospital. Hazard indicators linked with thrombocytopenia and thrombocytosis were analyzed by logistic/Cox regression.

Results: The prevalence of thrombocytopenia and thrombocytosis was 2.65% and 5.85% among ART-naïve patients, respectively. Correlated risk factors: (thrombocytopenia) older age, coinfection with HBV, leucopenia, anemia, and CD4 count <350 cells/μL; (thrombocytosis) WBC level ≥4.0 x 10⁹/L, anemia, NLR ≥2.0, and CD4 count ≥350 cells/μL. As for the recovery rate, it was 86.6/54.2, 83.4/46.3, 66.0/35.1, and 65.3/33.9 per 100 PYFU in thrombocytopenia/thrombocytosis at different treatment period (12m, 24m, 36m, and 48m). While the new-onset incidence of thrombocytopenia/thrombocytosis at different ART period (12m, 24m, 36m, 48m, and 84m) was 0.25/7.2, 0.19/6.31, 0.16/4.74, 0.16/4.55, 0.16/4.48, 0.15/4.41, and 0.15/4.39. And the driving forces of thrombocytosis were antiretroviral treatment, female, overweight, and WBC level ≥ 4.0 x 10⁹/L.

Conclusion: In the medical practice, while paying attention to thrombocytopenia, clinicians should be highly vigilant about the thrombocytosis of HIV/AIDS patients, and related treatment strategies need to be further studied.

Keywords: thrombocyte abnormalities, thrombocytopenia, thrombocytosis, HIV, antiretroviral therapy

Introduction
Thrombocytes, derived from megakaryocyte cytoplasm, play a critical role in haemostasis, thrombosis and coagulation of blood.¹ The normal platelet count ranges from 100,000 to 300,000/μL in adults. During human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, low or high platelets concentration is coupled with the incidence of both acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and non-AIDS-defining events.²

Hematologic abnormalities are common manifestations of advanced HIV disease and AIDS.

Unfortunately, the available information on thrombocytopenia and thrombocytosis is limited for HIV-positive individuals in China. Therefore, in this study, we systematically investigated the dynamic changes of thrombocytopenia and...
thrombocytosis before and after ART, and further analyzed the associated risk indicators, so as to provide certain guidance and basis for the optimization of clinical treatment strategies.

**Materials and Methods**

**Study Participants**

We performed a retrospective cohort study on 6637 HIV-infected members who initiated ART at the Beijing Ditan Hospital from January, 2013 to August, 2020. Subjects were excluded (1) if their age was <18 years while ART was introduced, (2) pregnant women, and (3) those with incomplete baseline data. To investigate the rate of new-onset thrombocyte abnormalities, 6074 HIV-positive individuals who were visited at least once (apart ≥12 months) after the beginning of therapy were conducted.

The protocols were approved by the ethics committees of Beijing Ditan Hospital, Capital Medical University (Approval No. 2021-022-1), and were carried out by the Declaration of Helsinki. All of clinical and laboratory data were used anonymously, so written informed consent was not required.

**Definitions**

Conditions were defined based on the following parameters in peripheral blood. Thrombocytopenia: platelet (PLT) count <100 x 10^9/L; thrombocytosis: platelet count >300 x 10^9/L; leucopenia: white blood cell (WBC) level <4.0 x 10^9/L; anemia: hemoglobin (HGB) level < 110 g/L (female) or < 120 g/L (male). Hematological recovery after ART was delimited as states that the PLT counts would be within the reference range of (100–300) x 10^9/L.

**Data Collection**

The following demographic, clinical and laboratory data were extracted from the electronic medical record system: age, sex, HIV transmission route, WHO clinical stage, body mass index (BMI), hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV) serostatus, syphilis, HIV viral load (VL), CD4 T cell count, CD4/CD8 ratio at pre-ART, and initial treatment regimen. Baseline WBC count, HGB level, neutrophil/lymphocyte ratio (NLR) were also involved.

**Statistical Analysis**

Continuous variables were presented as the medians and interquartile ranges (IQR) due to skewed statistical distributions, while categorical variables were expressed by counts and percentages. The chi-square test was used to evaluate the difference in categorical variables. Descriptive statistics were employed to illustrate the characteristics of the participants and the overall prevalence of thrombocyte abnormalities (including thrombocytopenia and thrombocytosis) at enrollment.

To explore the risk variables independently associated with thrombocytopenia or thrombocytosis, the underlying predictors determined by univariable analysis were further entered into a multivariable logistic regression model. And the final outcomes were displayed as adjusted odds ratios (AOR) with their respective 95% confidence intervals (CI).

Normalization rates of thrombocytes after ART were evaluated as the number of recovery cases per 100 person-years follow-up (PYFU), and line charts were adopted to describe the restoration trends during the observational period. Incidence density rate of thrombocytopenia and thrombocytosis were also reported as the same way.

Cox proportional hazards models were executed to assess the impact factors on thrombocytosis in HIV-subjects after one year of ART. Characteristics that were considered clinically relevant or that performed a univariate relationship with result were fitted into multivariate analysis to control possible confounders.

Statistical calculations were performed using SPSS software (version 26.0) and GraphPad (version 7.0). All tests were two-tailed, and significance was set at 0.05.

**Results**

**Characteristics of the Participants and Prevalence of Thrombocyte Abnormalities**

From January, 2013 to August, 2020, we enrolled 6637 HIV/AIDS people in our study. The median age of cohort subjects was 30 years (IQR, 26–37), and the ratio of male to female was 22:1. The main transmission route was sexual, which accounted for 92.3% of cases. In total, 59.7% of individuals had baseline CD4 counts <350 cells/μL. The demographic, immunologic and hematological details are listed in Table 1.

Overall, the prevalence of thrombocytopenia was 2.65% (n=176), while the prevalence of thrombocytosis was 5.85% (n=388) prior to initiating ART.

**Risk Factors for Thrombocyte Abnormalities Among ART-Naïve Patients**

We investigated the independent hazard markers for thrombocytopenia and thrombocytosis in therapy-naïve
Table 1 Demographic Data and Clinical Characteristics of the Study Subjects at the Beginning of Antiretroviral Therapy (n=6637)

| Variables                        | Thrombocytopenia (n=176) | Thrombocytosis (n=388) | Normal (n=6073) |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Age (years)                      | 34(29, 46)                | 30(25, 38)              | 30(26, 37)      |
| Sex                              |                           |                         |                 |
| Male                             | 166 (94.3)                | 364(93.8)               | 5820(95.8)      |
| Female                           | 10 (5.7)                  | 24(6.2)                 | 253(4.2)        |
| Transmission route               |                           |                         |                 |
| Homosexual                       | 115 (65.3)                | 294(75.8)               | 4893(80.6)      |
| Heterosexual                     | 38 (21.6)                 | 58(14.9)                | 733(12.1)       |
| Other/unknown                    | 23 (13.1)                 | 36(9.3)                 | 447(7.3)        |
| WHO clinical stage               |                           |                         |                 |
| I–II                             | 152(86.4)                 | 347(91.1)               | 5513(92.2)      |
| III–IV                           | 24 (13.6)                 | 34(8.9)                 | 469(7.8)        |
| BMI (kg/m^2)                     |                           |                         |                 |
| 18.5–24.0                        | 88 (66.2)                 | 186(61.4)               | 3136(65.6)      |
| < 18.5                           | 19 (14.3)                 | 40(13.2)                | 472(9.9)        |
| >24.0                            | 26 (19.5)                 | 77(25.4)                | 1171(24.5)      |
| HBsAg                            |                           |                         |                 |
| Negative                         | 148(85.5)                 | 363(95.3)               | 5649(94.7)      |
| Positive                         | 25(14.5)                  | 18(4.7)                 | 314(5.3)        |
| Anti-HCV                         |                           |                         |                 |
| Negative                         | 166(96.0)                 | 378(99.5)               | 5833(98.0)      |
| Positive                         | 7(4.0)                    | 2(0.5)                  | 119(2.0)        |
| Syphilis                         |                           |                         |                 |
| Negative                         | 105(64.4)                 | 205(59.8)               | 3688(64.9)      |
| Positive                         | 58(35.6)                  | 138(40.2)               | 1992(35.1)      |
| Baseline VL (copies/mL)          |                           |                         |                 |
| <100,000                         | 88(51.5)                  | 237(62.7)               | 4143(70.4)      |
| ≥100,000                         | 83(48.5)                  | 141(37.3)               | 1740(29.6)      |
| Baseline CD4 count (cells/μL)    |                           |                         |                 |
| <350                             | 144(82.8)                 | 219(56.9)               | 3595(60.0)      |
| ≥350                             | 30(17.2)                  | 166(43.1)               | 2397(40.0)      |
| Baseline CD4/CD8 ratio           |                           |                         |                 |
| <0.4                             | 151(87.3)                 | 272(71.0)               | 4238(71.9)      |
| ≥0.4                             | 22(12.7)                  | 111(29.0)               | 1658(28.1)      |
| WBC (×10^9 /L)                   |                           |                         |                 |
| ≥4.0                             | 106(60.2)                 | 353(91.0)               | 5288(87.1)      |
| <4.0                             | 70(39.8)                  | 35(9.0)                 | 785(12.9)       |
| HGB (g/L)                        |                           |                         |                 |
| ≥110(Female) or ≥120(Male)       | 119(67.6)                 | 308(79.4)               | 5651(93.1)      |
| <110(Female) or >120(Male)       | 57(32.4)                  | 80(20.6)                | 422(6.9)        |
| NLR                              |                           |                         |                 |
| <2.0                             | 79(46.5)                  | 168(45.8)               | 3589(61.2)      |
| 2.0–4.0                          | 60(35.3)                  | 130(35.4)               | 1791(30.5)      |
| >4.0                             | 31(18.2)                  | 69(18.8)                | 488(8.3)        |

Notes: Data are presented as n (%), or median (interquartile range). Variable had missing values: WHO clinical stage = 98; BMI = 1422; HBV = 120; HCV =132; Syphilis = 451; VL = 205; CD4 count = 86; CD4/CD8 ratio = 185; NLR = 232.

Abbreviations: WHO, world health organization; BMI, body mass index; HBsAg, hepatitis B surface antigen; Anti-HCV, antibody to hepatitis C virus; VL, viral load; WBC, white blood cell; HGB, haemoglobin; NLR, neutrophil-lymphocyte ratio.
patients, respectively. Multivariate logistic regression analysis demonstrated that older age (OR: 1.029, 95% CI: 1.015–1.042, \( p < 0.001 \)), co-infection with HBV (OR: 2.825, 95% CI: 1.782–4.480, \( p < 0.001 \)), WBC count < 4.0 \( \times 10^9/\)L (OR: 2.464, 95% CI: 1.717–3.536, \( p < 0.001 \)), HGB level < 110 g/L (female) or < 120 g/L (male) (OR: 2.962, 95% CI: 2.005–4.377, \( p < 0.001 \)), were connected with increased odds of thrombocytopenia. On the contrary, baseline CD4 count ≥ 350 cells/\( \mu \)L (OR: 0.527, 95% CI: 0.338–0.821, \( p = 0.005 \)) was negatively linked with thrombocytopenia.

As shown in Table 2, pre-ART CD4 count ≥ 350 cells/\( \mu \)L (OR: 1.616, 95% CI: 1.231–2.122, \( p = 0.001 \)), HGB level < 110 g/L (female) or < 120 g/L (male) (OR: 4.012, 95% CI: 2.750–5.854, \( p < 0.001 \)), NLR grade 2.0–4.0 (OR: 1.542, 95% CI: 1.172–2.029, \( p = 0.002 \)) and NLR > 4.0 (OR: 2.008, 95% CI: 1.334–3.021, \( p = 0.001 \)) were notably correlated with the presence of thrombocytosis. However, WBC count < 4.0 \( \times 10^9/\)L (OR: 0.467, 95% CI: 0.291–0.750, \( p = 0.002 \)), contrasted with WBC level ≥ 4.0 \( \times 10^9/\)L, was proved with lower occurrence risk of thrombocytosis.

### Normalization Rate of Thrombocyte Abnormalities After ART Introduction

Normalization rates were reckoned as the number of recovery cases per 100 person-years, and the restoration of thrombocytes was immediately observed after ART started. Longitudinally, the recovery rates of thrombocytopenia (86.6/100 PYFU) and thrombocytosis (54.2/100 PYFU) were the highest in the first year after initiating antiretroviral treatment. The restoration rates of thrombocytopenia/thrombocytosis at different treatment period (24m, 36m, and 48m) were 83.4/46.3, 66.0/35.1, and 65.3/33.9 (Figure 1).

### Incidence Rate of Thrombocyte Abnormalities After ART Introduction

After excluding patients who lack follow-up records as well as unusual baseline thrombocyte parameters, the ultimate cohort contained 6074 HIV/AIDS patients (Figure 2). The incidence proportion of new-onset thrombocytopenia and thrombocytosis were 0.5% (31/6074) and 13.4% (814/6074). From the vertical perspective, the incidence rate of thrombocytosis reached the top (7.2/100 PYFU) after one year of ART, which was much higher than thrombocytopenia (0.25/100 PYFU, \( p < 0.001 \)). The specific incidence rates of thrombocytopenia/thrombocytosis at different ART period (0, 12m, 24m, 36m, 48m, 60m, 72m, and 84m) were 2.65/5.85, 0.25/7.2, 0.19/6.31, 0.16/4.74, 0.16/4.55, 0.16/4.48, 0.15/4.41, and 0.15/4.39 (Figure 2).

### Risk Factors for New-Onset Thrombocytosis After 12 Months of ART

Taking into account the performances of platelets oddities throughout the observation period, we further analyzed the perilous elements of new-onset thrombocytosis after 1 year of therapy. So, all the below results precluded thrombocytopenia (n=13) from total cases (n=5208).

On the whole, the number of participants who received zidovudine (AZT)-based regimen was 133 (2.6%), tenofovir (TDF)-based regimen was 4951 (95.3%), lopinavir/ritonavir (LPV/r)-based regimen was 85 (1.6%) and integrase inhibitors (INSTIs) was 26 (0.5%) (Figure 3A).

As for thrombocytosis, the prevalence before initiation of therapy was 5.85/100 PYFU, whereas after ART, it increased to 7.20/100 PYFU. Of 7.2% of study subjects with thrombocytosis, 2.7% were taking AZT-based regimen, 2.7% were receiving LPV/r-based regimen, and 94.6% were on TDF-based regimen (Figure 3B). Table 3 displayed the ratio of thrombocythemia in each regimen after 12 months of therapy, and there was no difference among different regimens (\( P > 0.05 \)) (Supplementary Table).

Furthermore, we also assessed other potential burdens via univariate and multivariate Cox proportional hazard models, and the results showed that female (OR: 3.422, 95% CI: 2.418–4.843, \( p < 0.001 \)) and BMI > 24.0 kg/m\(^2\) (OR: 1.472, 95% CI: 1.145, 1.894, \( p = 0.003 \), versus normal BMI) had a statistically remarkable relation with the occurrence of thrombocythemia, while the effect of WBC count < 4.0 \( \times 10^9/\)L (OR: 0.537, 95% CI: 0.349–0.824, \( p = 0.004 \), versus WBC level ≥ 4.0 \( \times 10^9/\)L) was opposite (Table 4).

### Discussion

In our study, the overall prevalence of thrombocytopenia was 2.65% prior to starting ART, which is inconsistent with the outcomes of previous reports of 4.5%-26.0%.\(^3\)\(^-\)\(^5\) The discrepancy may be due to different definitions, races, disease stages, and the benefits of implementing of “treated all” strategy in recent years.

Cytopenia often affects all lineages of blood cells including anemia, leukopenia as well as
Table 2 Logistic Regression Analysis to Identify Factors Associated with Thrombocytopenia or Thrombocytosis in ART-Naïve Patients

| Variables                  | Thrombocytopenia |                       |                        | Thrombocytosis |                       |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|                            | OR (95% CI)      | P value               | AOR (95% CI)          | P value        | OR (95% CI)           | P value               |
| Age (years)                | 1.041 (1.029, 1.052) | <0.001                | 1.029 (1.015, 1.042)  | <0.001         | 0.995 (0.984, 1.005)  | 0.316                 |
| Sex                        |                  |                       |                      |                |                      |                       |
| Male                       | Ref              | –                     | Ref                  | –              |                       |                       |
| Female                     | 1.386 (0.723, 2.656) | 0.326                 | 1.517 (0.985, 2.336)  | 0.059          |                       |                       |
| Transmission route         |                  |                       |                      |                |                      |                       |
| Homosexual                 | Ref              | –                     | Ref                  | –              |                       |                       |
| Heterosexual               | 2.206 (1.516, 3.209) | <0.001                | 1.317 (0.983, 1.764)  | 0.065          |                       |                       |
| Other/unknown              | 2.189 (1.385, 3.461) | 0.001                 | 1.340 (0.936, 1.920)  | 0.110          |                       |                       |
| WHO clinical stage         |                  |                       |                      |                |                      |                       |
| I–II                       | Ref              | –                     | Ref                  | –              |                       |                       |
| III–IV                     | 1.868 (1.202, 2.904) | 0.005                 | 1.152 (0.800, 1.658)  | 0.448          |                       |                       |
| BMI (kg/m²)                |                  |                       |                      |                |                      |                       |
| 18.5–24.0                  | Ref              | –                     | Ref                  | –              |                       |                       |
| < 18.5                     | 1.455 (0.878, 2.412) | 0.145                 | 1.429 (1.002, 2.038)  | 0.049          |                       |                       |
| > 24.0                     | 0.799 (0.513, 1.244) | 0.321                 | 1.109 (0.843, 1.458)  | 0.461          |                       |                       |
| HBsAg                      |                  |                       |                      |                |                      |                       |
| Negative                   | Ref              | –                     | Ref                  | –              |                       |                       |
| Positive                   | 3.309 (1.960, 4.713) | <0.001                | 2.825 (1.782, 4.480)  | <0.001         | 0.892 (0.548, 1.451)  | 0.646                 |
| Anti-HCV                   |                  |                       |                      |                |                      |                       |
| Negative                   | Ref              | –                     | Ref                  | –              | 0.259 (0.064, 1.053)  | 0.059                 |
| Positive                   | 2.067 (0.950, 4.499) | 0.067                 |                       | –              |                       |                       |
| Syphilis                   |                  |                       |                      |                |                      |                       |
| Negative                   | Ref              | –                     | Ref                  | –              |                       |                       |
| Positive                   | 1.023 (0.739, 1.416) | 0.892                 | 1.246 (0.998, 1.557)  | 0.053          |                       |                       |
| Baseline VL (copies/mL)    |                  |                       |                      |                |                      |                       |
| <100,000                   | Ref              | –                     | Ref                  | –              |                       |                       |
| ≥100,000                   | 2.246 (1.655, 3.047) | <0.001                | 1.417 (1.142, 1.758)  | 0.002          |                       |                       |
| Baseline CD4 count (cells/μL) |            |                       |                      |                |                      |                       |
| <350                       | Ref              | –                     | Ref                  | –              | Ref                  | –                     |
| ≥350                       | 0.312 (0.210, 0.465) | <0.001                | 0.527 (0.338, 0.821)  | 0.005          | 1.144 (0.930, 1.409)  | 0.203                 |
|                           |                  |                       |                      |                | 1.616 (1.231, 2.122)  | 0.001                 |

(Continued)
Table 2 (Continued).

| Variables                      | Thrombocytopenia |             | Thrombocytosis |             |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
|                                | OR (95% CI)      | P value     | AOR (95% CI)   | P value     |
| Baseline CD4/CD8 ratio         |                  |             |                |             |
| <0.4                           | Ref              | –           | Ref            | –           |
| ≥0.4                           | 0.378(0.243, 0.588) | <0.001     | 1.071(0.855, 1.341) | 0.553       |
| WBC (×10^9/L)                  |                  |             |                |             |
| ≥4.0                           | Ref              | –           | Ref            | –           |
| <4.0                           | 4.455(3.264, 6.080)  | <0.001     | 0.669(0.469, 0.954)  | 0.027       |
| HGB (g/L)                      |                  |             |                |             |
| ≥110(Female) or ≥120(Male)     | Ref              | –           | Ref            | –           |
| <110(Female) or <120(Male)     | 6.265(4.494, 8.734)  | <0.001     | 3.496(2.682, 4.558)  | <0.001       |
| NLR                            |                  |             |                |             |
| <2.0                           | Ref              | –           | Ref            | –           |
| 2.0–4.0                        | 1.521(1.082, 2.137)  | 0.016      | 1.551(1.225, 1.963)  | <0.001       |
| >4.0                           | 2.885(1.884, 4.418)  | <0.001     | 3.021(2.247, 4.060)  | <0.001       |

Note: Data are presented as n (%), or median (interquartile range).
Abbreviations: OR, odds ratio; AOR, adjusted odds ratio; CI, confidence interval; WHO, world health organization; BMI, body mass index; HBsAg, hepatitis B surface antigen; Anti-HCV, antibody to hepatitis C virus; VL, viral load; WBC, white blood cell; HGB, haemoglobin; NLR, neutrophil-lymphocyte ratio.
thrombocytopenia, and are the most common complications of treatment-naïve patients. Higher viral loads, lower baseline CD4 levels, and advanced disease status

Figure 1 Recovery rate of thrombocyte abnormalities at different treatment duration. Recovery rate of thrombocytopenia and thrombocytosis after 12, 24, 36, and 48 months of antiretroviral therapy (blue: thrombocytopenia; red: thrombocytosis).

Figure 2 Incidence of new-onset thrombocyte abnormalities at different treatment duration. (A) Rate of new-onset thrombocytopenia after 12, 24, 36, 48, 60, 72, and 84 months of antiretroviral therapy. (B) Rate of new-onset thrombocytosis after 12, 24, 36, 48, 60, 72, and 84 months of antiretroviral therapy.

Table 3 The Ratio of Thrombocytosis in Each Regimen After 12 Months of Therapy

| ART Regimen | Normal  | Thrombocytosis |
|-------------|---------|----------------|
| TDF based   | 4596(92.83%) | 355(7.17%) |
| AZT based   | 123(92.48%)  | 10(7.52%) |
| LPV/r based | 75(88.24%)   | 10(11.76%) |
| INSTIs      | 26(100%)    | 0(0%) |

Abbreviations: ART, antiretroviral therapy; TDF, tenofovir disoproxil fumarate; AZT, azidothymidine; LPV/r, lopinavir/ritonavir; INSTIs, integrase inhibitors.
Table 4  Cox Proportional Hazard Regression Analysis to Identify Risk Factors Related to Thrombocytosis After 12 Months of Treatment

| Factors                         | Thrombocytosis (n=375) | Normal (n=4820) | Univariate Analysis | Multivariate Analysis |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|                                 | N                       | %               | N                   | %                     | HR (95% CI)        | P value       | HR (95% CI)        | P value       |
| Age (years)                     |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| <30                             | 195                     | 52              | 2433                | 50.5                  | Ref                 | –             |                     | –             |
| ≥30                             | 180                     | 48              | 2387                | 49.5                  | 0.897(0.733, 1.099)  | 0.295         |                     |               |
| Sex                             |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| Male                            | 333                     | 88.8            | 4654                | 96.6                  | Ref                 | –             | Ref                 | –             |
| Female                          | 42                      | 11.2            | 166                 | 3.4                   | 2.746(1.992, 3.786)  | <0.001        | 3.422(2.418, 4.843) | <0.001        |
| Transmission route              |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| Homosexual                      | 282                     | 75.2            | 3908                | 81.1                  | Ref                 | –             |                     | –             |
| Heterosexual                    | 66                      | 17.6            | 551                 | 11.4                  | 1.640(1.254, 2.143)  | <0.001        |                     |               |
| Other/unknown                   | 27                      | 7.2             | 361                 | 7.5                   | 1.043(0.702, 1.547)  | 0.836         |                     |               |
| WHO clinical stage              |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| I–II                            | 344                     | 91.7            | 4352                | 90.3                  | Ref                 | –             |                     | –             |
| III–IV                          | 23                      | 6.1             | 388                 | 8.0                   | 0.674(0.442, 1.029)  | 0.067         |                     |               |
| BMI (kg/m²)                     |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| 18.5–24.0                       | 173                     | 46.1            | 2503                | 51.9                  | Ref                 | –             | Ref                 | –             |
| < 18.5                          | 23                      | 6.1             | 354                 | 7.3                   | 0.995(0.618, 1.575)  | 0.835         | 0.984(0.636, 1.524) | 0.943         |
| >24.0                           | 96                      | 25.6            | 887                 | 18.4                  | 1.437(1.119, 1.844)  | 0.004         | 1.472(1.145, 1.894) | 0.003         |
| HBsAg                           |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| Negative                        | 352                     | 93.9            | 4494                | 93.2                  | Ref                 | –             |                     | –             |
| Positive                        | 17                      | 4.5             | 258                 | 5.4                   | 0.785(0.482, 1.277)  | 0.329         |                     |               |
| Anti-HCV                        |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| Negative                        | 367                     | 97.9            | 4639                | 96.2                  | Ref                 | –             |                     | –             |
| Positive                        | 4                       | 2.1             | 100                 | 3.8                   | 0.462(0.173, 1.238)  | 0.125         |                     |               |
| Syphilis                        |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| Negative                        | 241                     | 64.3            | 3008                | 62.4                  | Ref                 | –             |                     | –             |
| Positive                        | 113                     | 35.7            | 1617                | 37.6                  | 0.847(0.678, 1.059)  | 0.146         |                     |               |
| Baseline VL (copies/mL)         |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| <100,000                        | 248                     | 66.1            | 3312                | 68.7                  | Ref                 | –             |                     | –             |
| ≥100,000                        | 119                     | 31.7            | 1361                | 31.3                  | 1.097(0.882, 1.366)  | 0.405         |                     |               |
| Baseline CD4 count (×10⁹/L)     |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| <350                            | 205                     | 54.7            | 2862                | 59.4                  | Ref                 | –             |                     | –             |
| ≥350                            | 164                     | 43.7            | 1900                | 40.6                  | 1.214(0.989, 1.491)  | 0.064         |                     |               |
| Baseline CD4/CD8 ratio          |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| <0.4                            | 267                     | 71.2            | 3329                | 69.1                  | Ref                 | –             |                     | –             |
| ≥0.4                            | 95                      | 28.8            | 1351                | 31.9                  | 0.943(0.746, 1.192)  | 0.626         |                     |               |
| CD4 count at 1 year of ART (×10⁹/L) |                       |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| <350                            | 73                      | 19.5            | 1014                | 21.0                  | Ref                 | –             |                     | –             |
| ≥350                            | 226                     | 60.3            | 2781                | 57.7                  | 1.150(0.884, 1.496)  | 0.297         |                     |               |
| WBC (×10⁹/L)                    |                         |                 |                     |                       |                     |               |                     |               |
| ≥4.0                            | 342                     | 91.2            | 4196                | 87.1                  | Ref                 | –             | Ref                 | –             |
| <4.0                            | 33                      | 8.8             | 624                 | 12.9                  | 0.634(0.443, 0.906)  | 0.012         | 0.537(0.349, 0.824) | 0.004         |
are the driving forces for cytopenia among HIV/AIDS individuals. Just as our study observed, patients with lower WBC, HGB and CD4 counts had an increased occurrence of thrombocytopenia.

Moreover, we also found that thrombocytopenia was remarkably associated with older age and HBV-infected. Populations of our cohort ranged from 18 to 83 years with a median age of 30 years (IQR: 26–37), which prompted the fact that young people with sexually active were vulnerable to HIV. Besides, it also may be due to a higher prevalence of myelodysplasia in older persons. HIV infection promoted hepatitis B activity, while liver impairments damaged thrombopoietin production, they worked together to accelerate the thrombocytopenia.

Antiretroviral therapy can effectively recover the amounts of platelets. Considering the myelosuppressive effects of AZT, Ditan Hospital has gradually adopted TDF+3TC+EFV as the preferred regimen for HIV-infected patients since 2009. Nowadays, AZT-related thrombocytopenia has been relatively rare.

Compared with thrombocytopenia, thrombocytosis was often overlooked and the relevant data was limited. In our study, its prevalence was 5.85% among treatment-naive patients. It can be divided as two types: primary/secondary thrombocythemia. The latter is the most common in nowadays whose causes usually include acute/chronic infection, inflammation, hemorrhage/iron deficiency, drugs, and so on. The causes of thrombocytosis in HIV infection are complex. HIV virus itself, immune activation factors (such as interleukins-1, IL-6, and tumor necrosis factor), anemia, protease inhibitors and others all contribute to its occurrence. IL-6 has thrombopoietic-like activity, which cause a rise in thrombopoietin and the development of reactive thrombocytosis, while erythropoietin has a structural similarity to thrombopoietin and could directly stimulate thrombopoietin receptors. Moreover, protease inhibitors play a critical role in platelets storage by improving platelet survival time and reduce platelet aggregation. With the therapy prolongs, HIV viremia is suppressed, the degree of immune activation is decreased, and anemia is rectified. It seems the reason why the incidence rate of thrombocytosis is higher within short-time ART, and lower after long-time ART.

In agreement with the above description, our consequences showed that patients with higher baseline CD4 counts, anemia, and elevated NLR were more susceptible to thrombocytosis. NLR was an indication of systemic inflammation and interrelated with all-cause mortality among HIV-infected people.

Table 4 (Continued).

| Factors | Thrombocytosis (n=375) | Normal (n=4820) | Univariate Analysis | Multivariate Analysis |
|---------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
|         | N  | %  | N  | %  | HR (95% CI) | P value | HR (95% CI) | P value |
| HGB (g/L) |     |     |     |     |             |         |             |         |
| ≥110(Female) or ≥120(Male) | 348 | 92.8 | 4506 | 93.5 | Ref | – | – | – |
| <110(Female) or >120(Male) | 27 | 7.2 | 314 | 6.5 | 1.032(0.697, 1.526) | 0.876 | – | – |
| NLR |     |     |     |     |             |         |             |         |
| <2.0 | 237 | 63.2 | 2867 | 59.5 | Ref | – | – | – |
| 2.0–4.0 | 101 | 26.9 | 1460 | 30.3 | 0.863(0.682, 1.090) | 0.216 | – | – |
| >4.0 | 31 | 8.3 | 369 | 7.7 | 1.060(0.733, 1.534) | 0.755 | – | – |

Notes: Data are presented as n (%), or median (interquartile range). Variable had missing values: WHO clinical stage = 88; BMI = 1159; HBV = 74; HCV =85; Syphilis = 216; VL = 155; CD4 count = 64; CD4/CD8 ratio = 153; CD4 count at 1 year of ART = 1101; NLR = 130. Abbreviations: HR, hazard ratio; CI, confidence interval; WHO, world health organization; BMI, body mass index; HBsAg, hepatitis B surface antigen; Anti-HCV, antibody to hepatitis C virus; VL, viral load; WBC, white blood cell; HGB, haemoglobin; NLR, neutrophil-lymphocyte ratio.
TNF-α, TGF-β, and sCD14 were released by activated platelets promoted the occurrence of systemic inflammation,\textsuperscript{31,35} then triggered multiple NAD (cardiovascular events, neurocognitive disorders, renal fibrosis).\textsuperscript{34,36} Thrombocytosis further accelerated this process, and platelets activation still persisted despite successful ART.\textsuperscript{34}

Objectively speaking, thrombocytopenia, which often causes critical situations that need to take medical action immediately (such as gastrointestinal hemorrhage, cerebral hemorrhage), has attracted deep attention. From the classification of WHO clinical stages to the formulation of clinical diagnosis and treatment strategies,\textsuperscript{37} thrombocytopenia has always been an important consideration. While, the effects of thrombocytosis tend to be ignored in the clinical practice despite the consensus that it is an abnormal indicator. To make matters worse that PLT play a part in certain chronic disease (such as ischemic thrombosis and cardiovascular events)\textsuperscript{34} which will bring patients with fatal trouble.

Our results showed that the incidence of thrombocytosis was much higher than that of thrombocytopenia, whether in ART-naïve patients or during ART. Simultaneously, the recovery rate of thrombocytosis by antiviral therapy was far less than thrombocytopenia. Therefore, while paying attention to thrombocytopenia, we should be highly vigilant about the thrombocytosis, and multidisciplinary collaboration is needed if necessary. It was reported that as classic antiplatelet drugs, clopidogrel and low-dose aspirin also have anti-inflammatory and anti-activation effects.\textsuperscript{38,39} The clinical applications of them in HIV infection and pathogenesis remain further study.

This study has some limitations. Firstly, based on the inherent weakness of the retrospective study. Secondly, observational research restricts the discussion of mechanisms. Nevertheless, this large cohort investigation still likely reflects the actual circumstances of thrombocyte abnormalities of Chinese HIV-infected adults.

**Conclusion**

In the medical practice, while paying attention to thrombocytopenia, clinicians should be highly vigilant about the thrombocytosis of HIV/AIDS patients, and related treatment strategies need to be further studied.

**Acknowledgments**

The authors acknowledge the work of HIV healthcare providers for their diagnosis, nursing, and treatment of HIV/AIDS patients in Ditan Hospital.

**Author Contributions**

All authors made a significant contribution to the work reported, whether that is in the conception, study design, execution, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation; and took part in drafting, revising or critically reviewing the article. Furthermore, all authors gave final approval for the version to be published; have agreed on the journal to which the article has been submitted.

**Funding**

This work was supported by the Beijing Municipal Administration of Hospitals’ Ascent Plan (No. DFL20191802) and Beijing Municipal Administration of Hospitals Clinical Medicine Development of Special Funding Support (No. ZYLY202126).

**Disclosure**

All authors declared that there are no conflicts of interest.

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