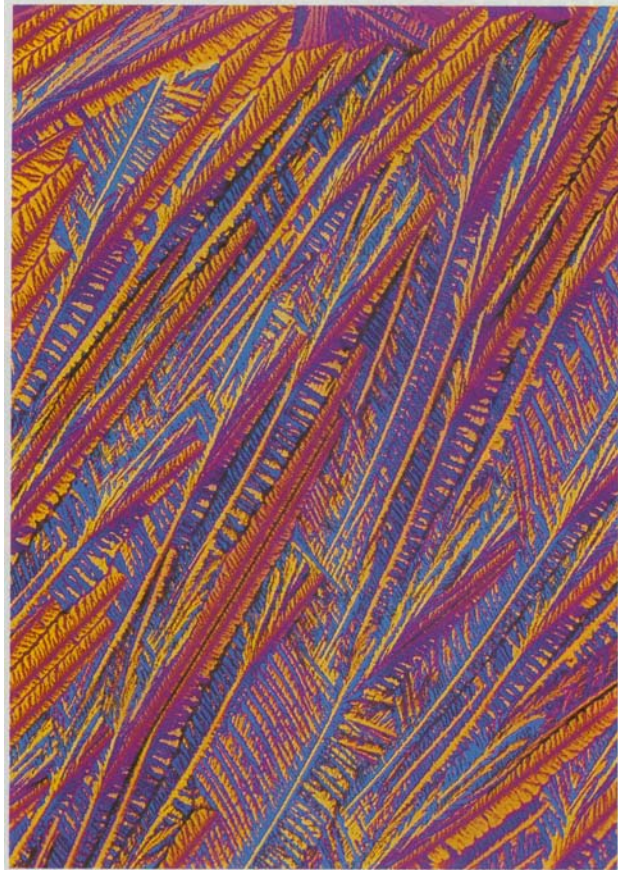


Didanosine

*Electromicrograph by
Michael W. Davidson*

Didanosine (also known as 2',-3'-dideoxyinosine, DDI, and Videx [Bristol-Myers Squibb Co, New York, NY]) was the second drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for combating the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). In the body, this drug acts in a manner similar to that of aztreonam (AZT) by mimicking a DNA build-

ing block and stopping the viral enzyme that reproduces viral genes. Unlike AZT, however, didanosine does not cause the severe anemia that makes some patients unable to tolerate AZT. Initially, it was thought that didanosine might have virtually no harmful side effects, but subsequent studies indicated that some patients suffer painful headaches and potentially fatal pancreatitis.

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