

AIDS VACCINE 2009, THE WORLD'S LEADING SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON HIV VACCINE RESEARCH, OPENS IN PARIS

More than 1,000 Researchers and 400 Studies Will Present the Latest on Scientific Progress Toward a Vaccine to End the Epidemic

(Paris - 19 October 2009) Researchers, funders policy makers and advocates from around the world are gathered in Paris for today's opening of AIDS Vaccine 2009, the world's leading scientific conference on AIDS vaccine research. The four-day meeting, which runs through 22 October, is hosted annually by the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise. The National Agency for Research on AIDS and Viral Hepatitis in France (ANRS) is the Local Host for AIDS Vaccine 2009.

With more than 1,000 attendees and more than 400 scientific presentations, the AIDS Vaccine conference is widely regarded as the most important scientific conference on AIDS vaccine research and development. This is also the largest AIDS Vaccine Conference in the meeting's nine-year history.

The record level of interest in AIDS Vaccine 2009 reaffirms both the vibrancy of the field and the conference's position as the leading forum in the field for scientific discussion on issues from HIV infection and the interaction of the virus with the immune system, to vaccine design and development and clinical research. Results from the recently completed Thai phase III trial, to be presented in full for the first time on 20 October at AIDS Vaccine 2009, demonstrate that a vaccine can prevent HIV infection. Yet experts agree that there is a long way to go before a safe and globally effective vaccine to prevent HIV infection will be available.

"The result of the Thai trial will be one of hundreds of important research highlights presented this week, in a rich conference program that demonstrates real progress and promise toward an HIV vaccine," said Alan Bernstein, Ph.D., executive director of the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise, a partnership of HIV vaccine researchers, funders and advocates that organized the annual AIDS Vaccine conference. "Developing a safe and globally effective AIDS vaccine is an enormous challenge, but research advances and an unprecedented level of collaboration are beginning to show us multiple paths toward achieving that goal."

"We have clearly increased our knowledge on the virus itself, its replication and its interaction with the immune system. This was possible thanks to a remarkable multidisciplinary approach and the strong commitment of national and international actors" says JFD, M.D, Ph.D., Conference chair and Director of ANRS, the principal research organization on Aids and Hepatitis in Europe. "This commitment must be reinforced at a political level, particularly in Europe".

"This progress has permitted the design and development of novel vaccine candidates and innovative strategies. Some of which will be presented at the conference. Analysis of the Thai trial will give us key information that will allow us to improve our strategies", says Yves Lévy, M.D, Ph.D., Conference co-chair and Scientific Director of ANRS Vaccine Program.

"Many questions still remain unanswered and we need to continue to focus on basic research to investigate in particular the immune mechanisms of protection we need to induce to obtain

an effective vaccine” according to Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, Ph.D., conference co-chair, Institut Pasteur Paris and Nobel Prize winner in 2008.

Despite the importance of current HIV prevention methods and tools, such as condom use, behavior change education and male circumcision, HIV still infects 2.7 million people each year, or more than 7,000 people a day, according to United Nations estimates. Approximately 95 percent of new HIV infections take place in low- and middle-income countries, with the vast majority of these continuing to occur in sub-Saharan Africa.

“A ready to use vaccine against HIV could be many years away, but when it does become available, it needs to be financed as a public good that is accessible for all,” said Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director. “Meanwhile we have to redouble our HIV prevention efforts to stop the continuing tide of new HIV infections.”

Michel Kazatchkine, executive director of the Global Fund to Fight HIV, TB and Malaria said: “When I face obstacles – be they political, financial, systemic or ideological in nature – I always come back to my core belief that science tells us what to do. It is by closely nurturing the connection between science and implementation, and by adjusting approaches when science shows we need to, that we move forward in the fight against AIDS.”

Conference Program

AIDS Vaccine 2009 features daily plenary presentations by leading researchers and clinicians along with symposia and oral abstract and poster sessions addressing every aspect of vaccine development and testing including the initiation of immune responses; mechanisms of protection against HIV infection; generation of antibody responses; immunological memory; vaccine design; and more. The conference program is available at: http://www.hivvaccineenterprise.org/conference/2009/scientific_program.aspx

For journalists, the conference offers a fully operational media center and daily press briefings presenting research news highlights and overviews by leading HIV vaccine experts. Press conferences presenting key conference news and research highlights will be held on Monday, 19 October at 16.00 and Tuesday and Wednesday, 20 and 21 October at 13.00 Paris time in Marriott Rive Gauche Conference Center, St. Germain des Pres room and are available via webcast at <http://www.hivvaccineenterprise.org/conference/2009/webcasting.aspx>.

About the Organizers

The Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise is a unique alliance of independent organizations around the world dedicated to accelerating the development of a preventive HIV vaccine. The Enterprise, comprised of top research, funding, advocacy and other stakeholder organizations, develops and drives implementation of the Scientific Strategic Plan for HIV vaccine development. Enterprise stakeholders set shared research agendas, create new structures for information sharing, develop new tools to harmonize global research efforts, and bring new organizations, expertise and resources to the challenge. For more information, please visit www.hivvaccineenterprise.org

The ANRS is the French National Agency for Research on AIDS and Viral Hepatitis. Its mission is to seek new ways to improve the prevention and treatment of these infections, both in the developed world and in countries with limited resources. The ANRS brings together researchers and physicians from French hospitals and research organizations (INSERM, CNRS, Institut Pasteur, IRD, universities) to work on prioritized scientific projects. At its overseas research sites, the ANRS mobilizes French and local scientists in work on healthcare issues of paramount importance to the developing world. The French ministries of research, foreign affairs, and health allocate to the ANRS an annual budget of approximately

44 million Euros (62 million dollars), 9% of which was devoted to research on an HIV vaccine in 2008. For more information, please visit www.anrs.fr

AIDS Vaccine 2009 is sponsored by the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise, ANRS, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, the Office of AIDS Research of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, Merck Sharp & Dohme, the Public Health Agency of Canada, sanofi pasteur, UNAIDS: The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the U.S. Military HIV Research Program, and the Wellcome Trust. Conference chairs are Jean-François Delfraissy, Director of ANRS, Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, Nobel Prize winner and Director of the Regulation of Retroviral infections Unit at the Institut Pasteur Paris, and Yves Levy, Scientific Director of ANRS Vaccine Program, Hôpital Henri Mondor, Créteil, France. More information on AIDS Vaccine 2009 is available at <http://www.hivvaccineenterprise.org/conference/2009/index.aspx>

For More Information:

For More Information:

Mark Aurigemma, Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise

Email: mark@aucomm.net

Phone: (until 15 October) 1-212-600-1960

(from 16 October) 1-646-270-9451

Marie-Christine Simon, ANRS

Email: information@anrs.fr

Phone: +33 (0)1 53 94 60 30

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