EXPERTS TO REPORT ON ADVANCES IN THE SEARCH FOR THE ULTIMATE HIV PREVENTION TOOL – A VACCINE – AT AIDS VACCINE 2013

Progress, Partnership and Perseverance is the Theme of the Leading Global Conference on HIV Vaccine Research

(New York, NY and Barcelona, Spain) – More than 450 research studies outlining the latest advances and obstacles in the search for an AIDS vaccine will be presented and debated at AIDS Vaccine 2013, the world's only scientific meeting dedicated exclusively to HIV vaccine research. The conference, which runs Monday, 7 October through Thursday, 10 October, will bring more than 1,000 of the world’s leading vaccine researchers, funders and policy makers to the International Convention Center in Barcelona, Spain for four days of exchange, debate and direction-setting for the field.

AIDS Vaccine 2013 is organized by the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise and by this year’s local conference hosts, the HIVACAT Program for HIV Vaccine Research, based in Barcelona.

A vaccine that could help to stop the global HIV/AIDS epidemic is one of the most-sought-after goals of modern scientific research, and among the most complex scientific challenges ever undertaken. Researchers meeting at AIDS Vaccine 2013 will report on several recent advances in the field, including:

- Progress in the study of several candidate vaccines being tested globally;
- Updates on strategies to better understand and increase the modest protection observed in the RV144 trial, the first study to reduce HIV infection risk through vaccination; This HIV vaccine clinical trial started in Thailand in 2003 and the first results were presented in 2009, showing modest protection from HIV infection;
- Advances in efforts to engineer immunogens capable of inducing the neutralizing antibodies that could form the basis of future vaccine candidates; and
- Novel vaccination strategies being investigated in non-human primates.
AIDS Vaccine 2013 opens as the field is also working to learn the lessons from studies such as HVTN 505, a phase 2b clinical trial stopped earlier this year when the vaccine tested was found to be ineffective. Researchers are studying the lessons of this and other trials to determine how to better predict complex immune responses that can help ensure protection against HIV infection.

“Progress, partnership and perseverance are the themes of this conference, and all three will be on display at AIDS Vaccine 2013,” said Bill Snow, director of the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise. “As we meet in Barcelona, huge strides are being made in efforts to understand and replicate the development of broadly neutralizing antibodies, which could be the basis for powerful new vaccine candidates. We are also seeing a flowering of cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional collaborations in vaccine research, as well as surprising new findings from individual labs and sophisticated animal studies.”

“Transforming advances in the lab into vaccine candidates for clinical trials will be high on the list of priorities for researchers, funders and policy makers meeting in Barcelona,” noted conference co-chair, Bonaventura Clotet, M.D. of the Institute for AIDS Research IrsiCaixa and codirector of the HIVACAT Program for HIV Vaccine Research. “Our ultimate challenge is to develop a vaccine that is not only safe and effective against HIV, but also practical in real world settings.”

“AIDS Vaccine 2013 will feature more than 450 research presentations selected from a record number of abstracts,” said conference co-chair, Josep M. Gatell, M.D., Ph.D., of the Hospital Clinic-IDIBAPS, University of Barcelona and codirector of the HIVACAT Program for HIV Vaccine Research. “The vibrancy of the field is demonstrated not only by the volume of outstanding research to be presented, but also by the fact that more than 50 percent of conference presentations will highlight the research of the young and early-career investigators, whose energy and new ideas represent the future of HIV vaccine science.”

Among the additions to this year’s conference program are a symposium session on therapeutic vaccines, and an additional plenary session with updates on the latest HIV vaccine clinical trial results, including HVTN 505.

The conference opening session, on Monday 7 October, will elaborate on the Progress, Partnership and Perseverance theme with presentations from Anthony Fauci of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, the world’s largest funder of AIDS vaccine research; vaccine development pioneer Stanley Plotkin; AIDS vaccine study, HVTN 505, Principal Investigator Magda Sobieszczyk; Ntando Yola of the Networking HIV/AIDS Community of South Africa (NACOSA), a South African civil society organization in
Cape Town: Bill Snow of the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise, a collaborative of the world’s leading HIV vaccine researchers and funders; HIVACAT codirectors Josep M. Gatell and Bonaventura Clotet; Catalonia Minister of Health, Boi Ruiz i Garcia; and Enric Banda, director of Science, Research and the Environment of the vaccine research funder “la Caixa” Foundation.

“AIDS Vaccine 2013 presents a critical opportunity to highlight Spain’s commitment to HIV vaccine research,” said Christian Brander, Ph.D., scientific director of the HIVACAT Program and ICREA Research Professor at IrsiCaixa. “Advances in HIV prevention, including the use of antiretroviral drugs to reduce transmission and infection, expanded access to voluntary medical male circumcision and promising research on microbicides to prevent infection in women and men are all contributing to important decreases in new infections. At the same time, a safe and effective vaccine remains the key missing piece in efforts to drive down new HIV infections worldwide and control the pandemic.”

The growing interconnection among various biomedical approaches to HIV prevention has brought leaders in different research fields together to establish a new, unified HIV prevention research conference beginning in 2014. Building on the tradition of the annual HIV vaccine and microbicide research meetings, the new biennial conference, HIV Research for Prevention: Vaccine, Microbicide and ARV-based Prevention Science (HIV R4P) (Cape Town, South Africa, 28-31 October 2014), will bring together the full spectrum of biomedical HIV prevention research.

“HIV R4P will promote the cross-fertilization of research and synergies in HIV prevention strategies that can lead to significant, ongoing reductions in the global epidemic,” said Robin Shattock, professor of Mucosal Infection and Immunity, Imperial College, London. “The new HIV R4P conference will help ensure that all of the potential synergies in research and implementation between different prevention approaches, including vaccine research, are fully explored in a format that will draw global attention to the promise of both new and established approaches to HIV prevention.”

Conference Media Briefings
Journalists who have completed media registration for the conference will have access to a fully operational media center and press briefings by leading HIV vaccine experts. A kick-off press conference, to be held on Monday, 7 October at 10h30 in room 120 of Barcelona’s International Convention Center, will feature the AIDS Vaccine 2013 Opening Session presenters, including leading AIDS vaccine researchers, funders and policy makers from Spain and around the world. Journalists who are unable to attend in-person may dial in to listen to the press conference. Other press briefings throughout the conference week will feature updates on the latest research and clinical trial highlights in the field. A full schedule of AIDS Vaccine 2013 press conferences is available here [http://vaccineenterprise.org/conference/2013/press-briefings](http://vaccineenterprise.org/conference/2013/press-briefings).
Facebook and Twitter
Conference participants will keep up with what is happening at AIDS Vaccine 2013 and share their updates with the broader community through Facebook @HIVEnterprise and Twitter, #AIDSVax2013, as well as through the Twitter accounts of two of HIVACAT’s leading institutions: @IrsiCaixa and @IDIBAPS_EN.

About the Organizers
The AIDS Vaccine Conference host, The Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise, is an alliance of independent organizations dedicated to accelerating the development of preventive HIV vaccines through mutual coordination, collaboration, knowledge sharing and recruitment of new resources and funders to the field.

This year’s local conference host is the HIVACAT program for the development of an effective vaccine against HIV. The organization is a joint public and private sector consortium unprecedented in Spain. It is composed of Catalonia’s two longest established and leading AIDS research centres, the Institute for AIDS Research IrsiCaixa, and the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Service at Barcelona’s Hospital Clinic, in conjunction with the organization ESTEVE, and with the support of the “la Caixa” Foundation, the autonomous Catalan government and the Clinic Foundation at Barcelona’s Hospital Clinic.

AIDS Vaccine 2013 is sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative (CHVI) Research and Development Alliance Coordinating Office (ACO), Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, the French National Agency for Research on AIDS and Viral Hepatitis (ANRS), GlaxoSmithKline Vaccines, Government of Canada, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), Mabtech, the U.S. Military HIV Research Program (MHRP), the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the U.S. National Institutes of Health, sanofi pasteur, ViiV Healthcare and Wellcome Trust. Additional local sponsors are “la Caixa” Foundation, Esteve, Futbol Club Barcelona Foundation, Bristol Myers Squibb and Janssen Cilag.

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