

NIAID creates HIV vaccine discovery branch

To accelerate the translation of basic discoveries about HIV into advances in vaccine design and evaluation, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has formed a new Vaccine Discovery Branch within the Vaccine Research Program in the Division of AIDS (DAIDS).

"There is broad scientific consensus that designing a safe and effective vaccine to prevent HIV infection will require enormous advances beyond present-day knowledge," says NIAID Director Anthony S. Fauci, M.D. "The NIAID Vaccine Discovery Branch will help remove fundamental obstacles to achieving this goal by focusing intensively on the development and sharing of new knowledge critical to vaccine development."

The new branch is dedicated to monitoring scientific developments in multiple fields related to HIV vaccine discovery, building more bridges between basic researchers and HIV vaccine designers, identifying gaps in knowledge pertinent to a preventive HIV vaccine and promoting research to fill those gaps.

"Cross-fertilization of HIV/AIDS research with the fields of genetics, structural biology, systems biology and others could open up new perspectives on how to overcome major obstacles to HIV vaccine design," says DAIDS Director Carl W. Dieffenbach, Ph.D. "The Vaccine Discovery Branch will be in an ideal position to spot these opportunities, promote the translation of new knowledge about HIV and foster fruitful research collaborations."

In addition, the new branch will

- Monitor vaccine discovery efforts and related basic HIV research within NIH, nationally and internationally
- Determine funding priorities for vaccine discovery research
- Plan, develop, implement and evaluate extramural grants and contracts to support the conduct of fundamental virology and immunology research as it relates to the discovery of novel AIDS vaccine concepts
- Foster the development and supply of necessary research reagents and other resources

The Vaccine Discovery Branch also will have chief oversight of the Center for HIV/AIDS Vaccine Immunology (CHAVI), a consortium of universities and academic medical centers established by NIAID to solve major problems in HIV vaccine development and design. A multidisciplinary group of scientists from across DAIDS will continue to participate in overseeing CHAVI.

Jorge Flores, M.D., deputy director of the Vaccine Research Program, will serve as acting chief of the new branch until a national search results in the selection of a new chief. Dr. Flores has been involved in the conduct and administration of vaccine research at NIH since 1979.

Source: NIH/National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

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