

Despite delays, IAVI keeps its AIDS vaccine hope alive

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The major advances in treatment and prevention haven't prevented the 2.1 million people contracting HIV while 1.5 million people died of AIDS-related causes in 2013. Infection rates continue to rise in specific regions and populations, three of five people living with HIV are not accessing antiretroviral therapy, and more than half of people living with HIV worldwide still don't know they have it. Even with maximized existing treatment and prevention options, models foresee hundreds of thousands of new infections per year in low- and middle-income countries in the decades to come. A vaccine will be needed to fully and sustainably stop new HIV infections.

The IAVI data suggests that an effectively rolled-out vaccine that provides 70 percent protection could reduce new infections by 40 percent in its first decade and by almost half in 25 years-up to 42 million infections averted by 2070, depending on the success of other HIV/AIDS interventions.

Dr Rajat Goyal, Country Director, IAVI mentioned, "In the last 30 years, HIV/AIDS has silently spread its tentacles claiming over 30 million lives worldwide and India alone is the home to the world's third largest population living with the disease. While the Government of India's sustained efforts have played a critical role in decreasing new infections by more than 55 percent over the last decade, HIV/AIDS continues its devastating march. Historically, the world has been able to conquer life threatening diseases through scientific innovation; one such major success being vaccines. Recognizing the power of this most effective public health weapon, IAVI has been working with the Government of India and across the globe to find a permanent solution to HIV through development of an AIDS vaccine."

Sharing his experiences and hope, Dr Goyal says, "As a medical doctor, working in the niche field of AIDS vaccine research, it is heartening to state that our collaborative efforts have resulted in significant scientific progress that shows evidence that a vaccine to end the disease is possible. Today, Indian and global scientific researchers in addition to the sustained governmental support, need closer engagement of the industry and innovative think tanks who are today's global citizens, to collaborate and accelerate science towards making this dream of a world free of HIV, a reality."