Vax Attack

April 1, 2001 By Shana Naomi Krochmal

After spending a decade in a news hole, developments in vaccine R&D are replicating faster you can say “1 billion infected worldwide.” Here’s the recent buzz from the vax machine:

Because they have to give 5 percent to *someone:* The $21 billion Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation pledged another $100 million to HIV vax research through the New York City-based International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI). “There’s no way commercial companies are going to see [an AIDS vaccine] as a priority,” Bill Gates said by way of explanation. The so-called challenge grant is meant to spur other Midas-sized gifts from other megabucksters. (Reply to sender, Jeff Bezos!)

Dot-com redux: Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com) logged on as the first IAVI corporate sponsor with $5 million to be donated over three years: The web portal’s worker bees will also help develop cyber campaigns to raise awareness of vax possibilities.

Not just for nerds: A high-tech vax that pairs the immune booster interleukin-2 (IL-2) with DNA could be helpful to HIVers. Harvard researchers found that the combo stimulated CD8 cell development in monkeys (see Data Dish, page 46).

A is for Africa: The first preventive vax specifically designed for Eastern Africa (where subtype A is the most common strain of HIV) began clinical trials at the University of Nairobi in February.

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