HIV Vaccine Awareness Day 2018

Promising news on the prevention front

May 18, 2018 By Trent Straube

Friday, May 18, marks HIV Vaccine Awareness Day (#HVAD) 2018. Led by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the observance day gives an opportunity to promote the quest for a preventive vaccine and to thank those involved in the research.

Although today's HIV treatments work very well, "we need an HIV vaccine because the idea of having a durable end to the AIDS pandemic will certainly depend upon a safe and effective vaccine," explained Anthony S. Fauci, MD, director of NIAID, in a video statement about the awareness day.

"Although this is an entirely preventable infection," Fauci said, "just the realities of life and circumstances that people are in make it very, very difficult to have a complete turning off of new infections or to the point where you could have a major impact on the trajectory of the epidemic."

When we speak about HIV-related vaccines, we general talk about two different kinds: a preventive vaccine that HIV-negative people would receive and a therapeutic vaccine that HIV-positive people would receive. In theory, a therapeutic vaccine would take the place of daily meds and would keep HIV from advancing to AIDS.

At least two preventive vaccine trials are under way and showing promise: HVTN 705, also known as the Imbokodo trial, and HVTN 702, which is a tweaked version of the previously tested RV144 vaccine.

As Fauci explained to POZ, the vaccines don't have to be 100 percent effective to be considered useful. In fact, if a vaccine were at least 50 percent effective, meaning it would reduce your risk of contracting HIV by 50 percent, then it would warrant a major rollout.

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