NIH Makes Substantial New Investment of Over $265M in HIV Cure Research

The National Institutes of Health awarded grants for HIV cure research to these 10 organizations. One focuses on pediatric populations.

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The National Institutes of Health has awarded approximately $53 million in annual funding over the next five years to 10 research organizations in a continued effort to find a cure for HIV. The new awards for the Martin Delaney Collaboratories for HIV Cure Research program further expand the initiative's 2016 renewal from six institutions to 10, and represent a funding increase of approximately 75 percent. Additionally, one of the new grants is focused specifically on HIV cure research in infants and children.

"June marked the 40th anniversary of the first reported U.S. cases of what would later be recognized as HIV/AIDS. Remarkable progress has been made in the areas of HIV treatment and prevention since that time. However, we must continue to press for a cure," said Anthony S. Fauci, MD, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the NIH.

NIAID, along with the National Institute of Mental Health, is one of the original NIH funders of the Martin Delaney Collaboratories. Today, the program is also funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; the National Institute on Drug Abuse; and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

The Collaboratory program was launched in 2010 in honor of the late HIV/AIDS activist Martin Delaney, who served on NIAID's AIDS Research Advisory Committee. The goal of the program is to expedite HIV cure research by bringing together researchers from multiple academic institutions, as well as the private sector, community and government partners to share common resources, data and methodologies. Together, collaborators will coordinate complex research studies and mentor the next generation of HIV cure researchers.

The new awards will focus on three key areas: basic research on HIV reservoirs and/or post-treatment control; strategies for durable control of viral rebound; and approaches to reducing, eradicating, or inactivating the latent virus. The pediatric award includes an additional focus on developing assays, tools, and imaging modalities specifically for studies in infants and children.

New concepts being introduced as a result of the program's expansion include the first-time use of CRISPR gene-editing technology to inactivate or remove dormant HIV, enhance immune responses, and engineer immune cells to be resistant to HIV infection. Other new concepts include the exploration of epigenetic modifiers to either flush out dormant (latent) HIV or prevent its activation, known as a "block-and-lock" approach; inhibition of latency establishment upon starting antiretroviral therapy; exploration of correlates of control of HIV rebound; and the use of genetically engineered viruses to track viral reservoirs. New therapeutic technologies include engineering of B cells to express broadly neutralizing antibodies; CD4-mimetic compounds; mRNA vaccines; trispecific antibodies; and nanoparticle formulations.

The new awards will continue to expand the involvement of international collaborators in HIV cure research, including sites in Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia, Australia, and North and South America.

The following awardees will receive the noted amount of funds each year for five years:

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Boston
Project Title: I4C 2.0: Immunotherapy for Cure
Grant: 1 UM1AI164556-01
Award: $4.9 million

Emory University, Atlanta
Project Title: Enterprise for Research and Advocacy to Stop and Eradicate HIV (ERASE-HIV)
Grant: 1 UM1AI164562-01
Award: $5 million

Gladstone Institutes, San Francisco
Project Title: HOPE (HIV Obstruction by Programmed Epigenetics)
Grant: 1 UM1AI164559-01
Award: $5.3 million

Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore
Project Title: Pediatric Adolescent Virus Elimination (PAVE) Martin Delaney Collaboratory
Grant: 1 UM1AI164566-01
Award: $5.7 million

Sanford Burnham Prebys, La Jolla, California
Project Title: RID-HIV (Reversing Immune Dysfunction) for HIV-1 Eradication
Grant: 1 UM1AI164561-01
Award: $5 million

Temple University, Philadelphia
Project Title: CRISPR for Cure

Grant: 1 UM1AI164568-01
Award: $4.8 million

University of California, San Francisco
Project Title: Delaney AIDS Research Enterprise to Cure HIV
Grant: 1 UM1AI164560-01
Award: $5.6 million

The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Project Title: Collaboratory of AIDS Researchers for Eradication (CARE)
Grant: 1 UM1AI164567-01
Award: $5.2 million

Weill Cornell Medicine, New York City
Project Title: REACH: Research Enterprise to Advance a Cure for HIV
Grant: 1 UM1AI164565-01
Award: $5.7 million

The Wistar Institute, Philadelphia
Project Title: BEAT-HIV: Delaney Collaboratory to Cure HIV-1 Infection by Combination Immunotherapy
Grant: 1 UM1AI164570-01
Award: $6.1 million

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