“Towards an HIV Cure” Initiative Has Two New Leaders

Sharon Lewin and Mark Dybul replace Jack Whitescarver and Françoise Barré-Sinoussi as cochairs of the advisory board.

March 1, 2018 By Trent Straube

The International AIDS Society’s “Towards an HIV Cure” initiative has appointed two new advisory board cochairs. Sharon Lewin, PhD, and Mark Dybul, MD, will replace outgoing cochairs Jack Whitescarver, PhD, and Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, PhD.

The IAS’s Towards an HIV Cure initiative promotes collaboration and an exchange of ideas and expertise across the globe and through many scientific fields in the quest for a cure. It hosts symposia, tracks resources and reports and awards scholarships.

“I am honored to be taking the IAS Towards an HIV Cure initiative forward at a time when there is renewed excitement in the field,” said Lewin in an IAS press release. “Since 2012 we have come a long way. The rapid advances in HIV cure research have presented clear opportunities for increased engagement between HIV researchers and other disciplines.

“We’ve most recently seen the coming together of the HIV cure and cancer fields, and I have no doubt that as we accelerate the pace of discovery in HIV cure research, we will continue to see more collaborations of this kind.”

“The IAS Towards an HIV Cure initiative is to be lauded for ensuring that HIV cure research has a seat at the global health table,” Dybul added. “I am delighted to be part of this next phase and look forward to working with such a remarkable group of scientists and policy makers in the coming years.”

Lewin is an infectious disease expert and the inaugural director of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity in Melbourne, Australia; she’s also a professor of medicine at the University of Melbourne and a National Health and Medical Research Council Practitioner Fellow.

Dybul, who was most recently the executive director of The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, is the faculty codirector of the Center for Global Health and Quality.

Barré-Sinoussi, who along with her former mentor Luc Montagnier, was awarded the 2008 Nobel

Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their discovery of HIV in 1983. Before the International AIDS Conference of 2012, POZ interviewed her about the possibility of a cure for AIDS. She said, in part:

> I am personally convinced that we can save a fairly good amount of money if the scientific community works together and shares expertise. This is one of the main objectives of the "Towards an HIV Cure" initiative.... We need to work with open minds. The HIV cure may come from young non-HIV researchers bringing novel innovative ideas. I am convinced that we have a lot to learn from other areas of biomedical research. We also need to increase collaboration between the academic and private sectors.

IAS is the world's largest association of HIV professionals; it is also the group behind the International AIDS Conference and the IAS Conference on HIV Science.

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