



# amfAR to Support Three Early-Career HIV Researchers on Trajectory to Independent Positions

The highly competitive Mathilde Krim Fellowship in Biomedical Research provides crucial support to promising young scientists

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amfAR is thrilled to present the new class of recipients of the Mathilde Krim Fellowship in Biomedical Research. These three researchers each bring unique perspectives and fresh ideas to long-standing problems in HIV prevention, treatment, and cure strategy and, with this award, are well on their way to long and promising careers in HIV research.

Named for amfAR's founding chairman, the Mathilde Krim Fellowship provides early career scientists with \$180,000 over two years with the possibility of an additional \$50,000 for Phase II support. Recipients are selected via a rigorous external peer-review process. This year's Fellows are Delphine Depierreux, PhD, of Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle; Ebony Gary, PhD, of The Wistar Institute in Philadelphia; and Shalini Singh, PhD, of Northwestern University in Chicago.

"Supporting young scientists is paramount to ensuring the future of the field of HIV research," amfAR Chief Executive Officer Kyle Clifford said. "amfAR is privileged to support these three outstanding researchers, whose work holds real promise for improving the lives of people living with HIV and strengthening the global HIV community."

In her study, Dr. Delphine Depierreux will look to increase the ability of natural killer (NK) cells to induce long-term control, or even a cure, for HIV. While we know NK cells can target and destroy HIV-infected cells, less is understood about how NK cells interact with HIV-infected CD4+ T cells. Using gene-editing tools like CRISPR, Dr. Depierreux will systematically "turn off" individual genes in these HIV-infected cells to observe how those changes affect NK cells' ability to detect and kill them. These findings can be used to develop novel HIV treatment strategies, harnessing and enhancing the ability of NK cells to target HIV-infected cells.

A study by Dr. Ebony Gary will investigate incorporating a helper enzyme called ADA-1 to assist future HIV vaccine candidates. Previous attempts to develop an HIV vaccine have largely fallen short, in part due to their inability to produce a sufficiently robust immune

response. ADA-1 can boost immune response when delivered alongside a vaccine; in this study, Dr. Gary will clarify how ADA-1 manages to enhance both antibody production and immune cell activity. As ADA-1 is an FDA-approved drug in other contexts, it could be quickly repurposed as an adjuvant in future HIV vaccine candidates. If successful, this work could unlock more effective vaccine strategies in other challenging infectious diseases, aside from HIV.

Finally, Dr. Shalini Singh seeks to leverage lessons learned in the use of CAR T cell therapy for cancers to develop a safe, adaptable, and long-lasting immunotherapy that can help people living with HIV maintain viral control without requiring daily medication. While CAR T cell therapy has been extraordinarily effective in cancer treatment, HIV's ability to mutate and escape detection has made it less successful in this field. Dr. Singh will leverage a highly flexible system called MASS-CAR to combine CAR T cells with broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs) to better recognize multiple forms of HIV. In this study, she'll evaluate different combinations of MASS-CAR T cells and bNAbs to identify which are most effective at clearing HIV-infected cells and controlling the viral reservoir.

"Previous Krim Fellows have routinely cited this award as critical to jumpstarting their independent careers in HIV research," amfAR Vice President of Research Dr. Andrea Gramatica said. "We have no doubt that Drs. Depierreux, Gary, and Singh are well on their way to advancing scientific discovery and amfAR is pleased to provide the backing to help them do just that."

amfAR is a leading nonprofit dedicated to advancing scientific discovery and transforming global health with a primary and enduring commitment to ending the HIV/ AIDS epidemic. Serving as a catalyst for breakthrough science, amfAR supports innovative research in areas where viruses and the immune system play a defining role, including cancer, neurological conditions, autoimmune disorders, and other viral diseases. Through strategic investments, global research partnerships, and evidence-based policy leadership, amfAR helps accelerate discoveries that improve health and save lives. Since 1985, amfAR has raised more than \$950 million and awarded in excess of 3,900 grants to scientists worldwide. Learn more at [www.amfar.org](http://www.amfar.org).