HIV Vaccine Awareness Day 2021

AVAC's theme for HVAD 2021 is "HIV Vaccine Research: Building on Lessons from COVID."

May 18, 2021 By Trent Straube

Tuesday, May 18, marks HIV Vaccine Awareness Day (#HVAD) 2021. It's designated as a time to thank the researchers, community leaders, health professionals and volunteers working to develop a vaccine to prevent HIV/AIDS. It's also a day to educate the public about advancements in vaccine research and raise awareness about the need for an HIV vaccine (sample social media posts are embedded throughout this article).

> Our theme for #HVAD2021 is "HIV Vaccine Research: Building on Lessons from COVID". We're focused on how the COVID experience can speed the development & delivery of vaccines for HIV, TB, malaria & other diseases. We must all become #HIVvaccineaware https://t.co/6ILq2pAndw
>
> — AVAC (@HIVpxresearch) May 14, 2021

HVAD is led by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and overseen by Anthony Fauci, MD—yes, the same Anthony Fauci who became world-renowned for his leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Watch the video below to see Fauci explain the two main approaches to developing HIV vaccines and why we need a vaccine.

Numerous groups across the world invest in HIV vaccine research and promote HVAD. For example, AVAC, an organization that focuses on global support for HIV prevention, has a theme for

HVAD 2021: “HIV Vaccine Research: Building on Lessons from COVID.” On its website, AVAC writes:

> This HIV Vaccine Awareness Day…takes place in a new era of vaccine science. Accelerated by the knowledge, technologies, networks and community engagement models developed for HIV, the search for COVID-19 vaccines produced extraordinary results in record time. COVID demonstrated that a global sense of urgency to end a pandemic can produce ample research money overnight, help pharmaceutical companies, academic institutions and nonprofits overcome previously insurmountable barriers to collaboration, and shrink vaccine development and testing timelines from decades to months. And yet, the results of those innovations are not translating quickly or equitably enough to end this pandemic.
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> AVAC’s theme for HVAD 2021 is “HIV Vaccine Research: Building on Lessons from COVID.” We are focused on how the COVID experience can speed the development and delivery of vaccines for HIV, TB [tuberculosis], malaria and other diseases.

AVAC’s website also includes social media graphics you can download, sample message you can use in your own posts and vaccine basics presented in an HVAD PowerPoint presentation.

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Seattle Vaccine Trials Unit (@seattle.vaccine.unit)

Similarly, the NIH offers a downloadable infographic on HIV vaccines. Developing an HIV vaccine is a challenge, the NIH writes in the graphic, adding that HIV mutates rapidly and has unique ways of evading the immune system. What’s more, according to the graphic, an HIV vaccine differs from

other vaccines because:

- Most vaccines mimic the immune responses of recovered patients. There are no documented cases of an HIV-infected person developing an immune response that cleared the infection. Researchers are working to define and understand the responses that may protect against HIV.

- Most vaccines are inactivated or weakened viruses. Inactivated HIV was not effective at eliciting immune responses in clinical trials. A live form of HIV is too dangerous to use.

- Most vaccines are effective against pathogens that are rarely encountered. People in high-risk groups might be exposed to HIV daily.

The NIAID website offers a History of HIV Vaccine Research, which begins in 1984 and continues to the present day's Mosaico trial. That effort involves gay and bi men and transgender people and seeks to develop a vaccine that is effective against many strains of HIV found across the globe.

In advance of #HIVVaccineAwarenessDay - a time to thank the volunteers, community members, health pros & scientists working to find an effective preventive HIV vaccine - read @USAID's blog on how #HIV vaccine advocacy can leverage lessons from #COVID https://t.co/MqSgv3KPim #HVAD

— @glassrothcreative (@GlassrothCreate) May 17, 2021

For a collection of POZ articles related to vaccines—including those for COVID-19, hepatitis, HIV and cancer—click #Vaccine. You'll find "Therapeutic Vaccines May Help Control HIV Off Treatment," "A Shot in the Dark: We got COVID-19 vaccines in record time, so why are HIV vaccines taking so long?" and the very recent "New Vaccine Approaches Show Early Promise for HIV," which details two experimental vaccine approaches, using mRNA protein delivery and

germline targeting, that are in the early stages of development.

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