

# HHS NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has funded six National Cooperative Vaccine Development Groups to facilitate the development of an AIDS vaccine. The six groups will be funded for three to five years; they will receive approximately \$4 million for the first year. Additional groups will be funded in 1989.

NIAID created the NCVDGs to foster collaboration among academic research institutions, industry and government, to further the development of candidate vaccines for the prevention of AIDS.

"This is an important step in the national effort to create a vaccine to prevent AIDS," said Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, director of NIAID. "Because of the complex nature of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the cause of AIDS, development of a vaccine will require innovative efforts by scientists in many areas."

Leads from basic research in virology, molecular biology, structural biology, genetics and immunology will be incorporated into the NCVDG approach to vaccine development. In general, the vaccine strategies may include approaches such as the use of whole virus preparations (either live or killed), or those using viral vectors, such as vaccinia into which one or more HIV gene(s) have been inserted. Strategies are also expected to include subunit preparations (those using only a portion of the virus), recombinant DNA-produced antigens and synthetic vaccine antigens. Research conducted by the NCVDGs will include basic

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studies, developmental studies, scale-up and production, evaluation in laboratory animals and possibly some clinical trials.

"The NCVDPGs were established to facilitate the joint application of research expertise from diverse institutions--academic and/or non-profit along with commercial organizations--with the resources of NIAID. We are creating a broad effort in our overall AIDS vaccine plan to improve chances for development of safe and effective AIDS vaccines. The NCVDPGs are one important component of that plan," said Dr. Fauci.

NIAID cooperative agreements support the NCVDPGs. Cooperative agreements differ from both investigator-initiated grants and NIAID-initiated contracts, the more common mechanisms for government funding of scientific research. Cooperative agreements allow the scientists to define and manage their research while at the same time NIAID has a substantial role assisting them. Scientists from the Prevention Branch of the NIAID AIDS Program will participate in each vaccine development group to promote use of information and resources available through NIAID.

By pooling the expertise of scientists from a variety of disciplines and institutions encompassing academic research and industry, and by interaction with government scientists, the NCVDPGs will have the capacity to generate new approaches and strategies for the development of HIV vaccines. The groups are structured to be able to translate their concepts rapidly into improved candidate vaccines.

"Clearly, in order to cover all the bases in vaccine development there should not be any gaps in the **matrix** of AIDS vaccine efforts. Through the NCDVPGs we place a major emphasis on the **individual creativity** of the investigators," said Dr. Fauci.

The initial six groups funded in 1988 are:

- o Lawrence Corey, M.D., University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle;
- o Francis A. Ennis, M.D., University of Massachusetts Medical Center, Worcester;

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- o Murray B. Gardner, M.D., University of California at Davis School of Medicine, Davis;
- o Ronald C. Kennedy, Ph.D., Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research, San Antonio, Texas;
- o Edward S. Mocarski, Ph.D., Stanford University School of Medicine, Stanford, Calif.; and
- o Richard A. Young, Ph.D., Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, Cambridge, Mass.

On March 15, NIAID announced in the NIH Guide to Grants and Contracts that additional NCVDGs will be funded in 1989. Prospective applicants are requested to submit a letter to the Prevention Branch of the NIAID AIDS Program by May 15, 1988, describing their intent to apply. Applications, available from the same office, will be due July 15, 1988.

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