

Henderson, David 1996

Dr. David Henderson Oral History 1996 A

Download the PDF: [Henderson_David_Oral_History_1996](#) (PDF 194 kB)

Interview on June 13, 1994 with Dr. David Henderson by Drs. Caroline Hannaway, Victoria Harden, and Dennis Rodrigues

Do you have suggestions of other people to whom we should talk? We have talked with a fair number of people. We have talked to Dr. John Gallin, for example, and some others, but people who made specific contributions? We have talked to Harvey Klein, we have talked to Barbara Baird, we have talked to one technician in a laboratory.

Henderson: Who was that?

Rodrigues: Judith Swain, who was with Henry Masur.

Harden: We also talked with Henry Masur and Cliff Lane. Are there other people that occur to you right off that we should not miss?

Henderson: You talked to Bill Blattner, you said?

Harden: Blattner and Gallo.

Henderson: And [Dr. Robert] Bob Yarchoan?

Rodrigues: No, we did not talk to him. We had him on one of the lists.

Harden: Oh, yes.

Henderson: He might be a reasonable [candidate]. For drug development. That is an interesting part of the story that we did not talk about and he has played a role in that. Do you want insiders only? My CDC colleagues are people that would be worth talking to, but the two we talked about are the two that had the most insight about what was happening.

Harden: Caroline and I co-chair an AIDS History Group and we are trying to identify who is doing this kind of work around the world. Dr. Paul is interested in this. I think Dr. Paul's first question was, "Who is interviewing the people in Paris?" So we are trying to figure out all of these places. The CDC is a little hole. We need money, if not for us, for somebody to go down there and do these interviews. So we are interested in anything like that. We know who is talking to people in New York and in California, but there may be others as well. We do not want to miss the major people.

I have two things that I would like to ask you about. If you have papers, correspondence, any kinds of documents that you have maintained over time, we want to make sure that you are aware that those need to be sent to the National Archives before you retire. The Medical Board minutes have proved extremely valuable. I am interested in the patient records in the Clinical Center. I know the privacy considerations. But we are thinking of what somebody 200 years from now may want to know about this. I would love to get hold of a copy of your questionnaire about the transmission risks that you were talking about.

Henderson: I think actually three weeks ago my upstairs staff wanted to throw them all away. Nonetheless, I suspect I can find one of those.

Harden: Anything like that, that documents your early activities we should have.

Henderson: Okay.

Hannaway: The placard.

Harden: The placard specifically. In the Medical Board minutes, you talk about the change in the placards that you put on the doors of the patients. We would love to have one of each of the placards. Dr. Klein has given me samples of the questionnaires they asked blood donors to complete so we can see how those changed over time. We are very interested in any documents like this or any other artifacts.

Rodrigues: We have not had much luck trying to preserve any artifacts associated with the early work done on AIDS. We are thinking about what could be done in the future if we were trying to do an exhibit on AIDS research. For instance, when we talked to Dr. Gallo we said, "Is there anything from your laboratory you can think of that we could use if we did an exhibit case, such as some examples of artifacts from your laboratory that were involved in your work in trying to identify HIV?" And he said, "No, we really do not have anything. We did not keep anything. Everything was just thrown out." So we always ask people to keep that in mind and if you ever do, in your travels, come across something that somebody has kept a hold of that has an interesting historical story to it, let us know.

Henderson: Six months ago, I threw away all of my old slides. I had a wastebasket completely filled with old slides. Those slides effectively tracked the [epidemic]. Of course all these data are at the CDC. But I had the slides that I got from the CDC, that tracked over time the progress of the epidemic and they were all things that you would have been happy to have. I wish I had known about your requests, but I did not.