

IAVI in Africa

Working with partners to develop an AIDS vaccine



The Kenya AIDS Vaccine Initiative (top) and Uganda Virus Research Institute (bottom) are partnering with IAVI and researchers in South Africa, Rwanda and Europe.

HIVA.DNA-MVA. This vaccine candidate was designed jointly by the University of Oxford and University of Nairobi and is tailored for subtype A of HIV, the variant of the virus most common in east Africa. It is constructed so that there is no risk of it causing HIV infection or AIDS.

Trials are underway in Kenya, South Africa, Switzerland, Uganda and the United Kingdom and are expected to begin this year in Rwanda:

Kenya

- IAVI is partnering with the University of Nairobi and Kenya AIDS Vaccine Initiative (KAVI) to conduct trials of HIVA.DNA-MVA at the Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi. The first trial began in March 2001 after regulatory approval was granted by the Kenyan Office of the President and the National Council for Science and Technology. Dr. J.J. Bwayo leads the research team.

The nonprofit International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) partners with researchers, community groups, political leaders and others throughout Africa to accelerate the development of a preventive AIDS vaccine.

A vaccine is the best hope to end the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, now infecting 14,000 people—thousands in Africa—every day. A preventive vaccine would be given to people uninfected with HIV, to prevent them from becoming infected or developing AIDS. A vaccine would complement existing HIV/AIDS education and treatment programs.

In Africa and around the world, IAVI sponsors public-private partnerships that study promising AIDS vaccine candidates. IAVI is committed to finding an AIDS vaccine appropriate for developing countries, where most new HIV infections are occurring. If a vaccine sponsored by IAVI proves effective, the researchers have agreed that it will be made available in developing countries at reasonable prices.

Update on IAVI-sponsored AIDS vaccine research

IAVI partners with researchers in Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Rwanda and Europe to study a promising preventive AIDS vaccine candidate,

Uganda

- IAVI is partnering with the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) under an agreement with the Government of Uganda in August 2001. A trial underway in Entebbe began in February 2003 after regulatory approval was granted by the National Council for Science and Technology. IAVI is also collaborating with the Government of Uganda to expand AIDS vaccine research in the country. Dr. Pontiano Kaleebu leads the research team.

South Africa

- IAVI works with the South African AIDS Vaccine Initiative (SAAVI) on trials in Durban and Soweto. Principal Investigators are Prof. James McIntyre and Drs. Andrew Robinson and Glenda Gray. AIDS vaccine trials in South Africa are coordinated by SAAVI.

Rwanda

- IAVI expects to begin a trial in Kigali in 2004. IAVI is partnering with Dr. Susan Allen of the University of Alabama.

Each of these trials is a small-scale trial to test safety and immune response. If HIVA.DNA-MVA performs well in small-scale trials, it can advance to a large-scale, multi-year trial to test efficacy in preventing HIV/AIDS. IAVI is developing sites for a large-scale trial at locations throughout east Africa.

Building infrastructure for vaccine trials

The teams working with IAVI in Africa include medical professionals, immunologists, laboratory technicians and community mobilization specialists. IAVI provides financial and technical support for the teams to participate in ongoing training in international standards for Good Clinical Practices and Good Laboratory Practices and in providing HIV testing and counseling. Team members have traveled to Kenya, South Africa, the UK and the US for training.

IAVI also provided financial assistance for the construction and outfitting of vaccine trial facilities in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda that include reception areas, exam and counseling rooms and state of the art immunology laboratories.

Involving communities and political leaders in AIDS vaccine research

IAVI works with communities across Africa to build awareness about AIDS vaccine research, advocates for political leaders to prioritize AIDS vaccine research and helps journalists understand vaccine research. IAVI established a network of NGOs and community organizations to assist in outreach.

For example, in Kenya, KAVI organized an advocacy walk to build interest in AIDS vaccine trials and help recruit volunteers. In Uganda, IAVI held a briefing for parliamentarians, and UVRI issues a regular newsletter, *Uganda AIDS Vaccine Update*. In South Africa, SAAVI and IAVI has signed an agreement with the South Africa Medical Research Council to educate communities about an AIDS vaccine as part of the South African HIV Vaccine Action Campaign.

IAVI-sponsored trials are overseen by Community Advisory Boards (CAB). CABs meet in advance of the start of trials to help plan the research protocols, and throughout the trials, to monitor their progress. CABs also assist in educating the community and in recruiting volunteers. The CABs include a cross-section of local political, religious and other opinion leaders as well as people living with HIV/AIDS.