

The launch of a European Alliance dedicated to accelerating new concepts in HIV Vaccine research

[26th January 2016, Paris, France and Lausanne, Switzerland]. The European Commission has granted over 22 million Euros to the European HIV Vaccine Alliance (EHVA) to develop a multidisciplinary platform to evaluate novel preventive and therapeutic vaccines. The grant is supplemented with additional 6 million Euros from the Swiss government for the Swiss project partners.

EHVA, a partnership initiated by Prof. Yves Lévy, CEO of the French Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM) and Prof. Giuseppe Pantaleo, Executive Director of Swiss Vaccine Research Institute from Lausanne University Hospital (CHUV), brings together 39 industrial and academic partners from Europe, the US and Africa, with multidisciplinary expertise and state-of-the-art technologies.

HIV remains a major global health challenge with 37 million people living with HIV, and over 2 million new infections every year. Numerous biomedical HIV prevention strategies (such as PrEP and PEP), though proven successful, are difficult to sustain long-term. A vaccine still represents the most effective public health tool in combating HIV/AIDS.

EHVA aims to develop several innovative HIV vaccine concepts in both prophylactic and therapeutic settings. The prophylactic vaccine strategy focuses on developing novel vaccine candidates and vaccination regimens able to enhance protective antibody responses, while the therapeutic vaccine approach will study ways that will contribute to developing a functional cure by combining vaccines with other immunological interventions. Building on the tremendous wealth of experience the HIV research field has gained in the past decades, EHVA will develop a robust process that facilitates the selection and development of promising vaccine candidates, from discovery and manufacturing through to early clinical trials. EHVA will also engage with industrial experts and liaise closely with leading African scientists and the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) with a view to testing future vaccines in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Professor Yves Lévy, Coordinator of EHVA said, "Beyond the scientific excellence of the different teams involved in this very ambitious project, EHVA will structure HIV vaccine Research in Europe via its 39-partner alliance pooling their expertise and know-how around an ambitious 5-year work plan. We are very grateful for the financial support provided by the European Commission and the Swiss government that will enable us to implement this workplan".

Professor Giuseppe Pantaleo, Scientific Co-coordinator of EHVA said, "EHVA represents a significant boost for the HIV vaccine research in Europe. It not only gives us the opportunity to accelerate the development of a number of novel vaccine candidates, but more importantly it enables us to develop tools for better understanding of the human immune responses to vaccines and how that is associated with vaccine efficacy, and therewith to help to down-select promising vaccine candidates in the future."

Dr Ruxandra Draghia-Akli, Director of the Health Directorate at the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission said: "EU funded research offers a triple win: it promotes European scientific excellence and global collaborations, helps to develop novel prophylactic and therapeutic vaccine candidates and enhances European competitiveness. The

Commission is pleased to support the EHVA project as part as its efforts to overcome the hurdles of vaccine development and to reach the goal of an AIDS-free world.”

EHVA is a 5-year project (starting January 2016) funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under the grant agreement no. 681032.



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