

OFFICE OF AIDS RESEARCH

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Mission:

The NIH Office of AIDS Research (OAR), located within the Office of the Director, coordinates the scientific, budgetary, legislative, and policy elements of the NIH AIDS research program and serves as the principal liaison with HHS, other federal agencies, and domestic and international governmental and non-governmental organizations on behalf of NIH AIDS-related research. The NIH represents the largest and most significant public investment in AIDS research in the world. Our response to the epidemic requires a unique and complex multi-institute, multi-disciplinary, global research program. Perhaps no other disease so thoroughly transcends every area of clinical medicine and basic scientific investigation, crossing the boundaries of the NIH Institutes and Centers. This diverse research portfolio demands an unprecedented level of scientific coordination and management of research funds to identify the highest priority areas of scientific opportunity, enhance collaboration, minimize duplication, and ensure that precious research dollars are invested effectively and efficiently. This is recognized in the unique role given the OAR in its authorizing legislation, the NIH Revitalization Act of 1993. That law establishes OAR as a model for trans-NIH coordination, vesting it with primary responsibility for overseeing all NIH AIDS-related research, and thus allowing NIH to pursue a united research front against the global AIDS epidemic.

Selected Achievements and Initiatives:

Setting the AIDS Research Priorities: Comprehensive Plan and Budget: The Office of AIDS Research (OAR) develops an annual NIH Plan for HIV-Related Research that is based on the most compelling scientific priorities that will lead to better therapies and preventions strategies for HIV infection and AIDS. OAR has established an effective model for developing a consensus on the scientific priorities of the Plan, utilizing planning groups composed of NIH scientists and experts from academia and industry, as well as representatives from the AIDS community, who meet to develop the Plan.

The Plan serves as the framework for developing the annual NIH AIDS budget; for determining the use of NIH AIDS-designated dollars; for tracking and monitoring expenditures; and for informing the scientific community, the public, and the AIDS-affected community about NIH AIDS research priorities. In collaboration with the Director of NIH, the OAR determines the total annual NIH AIDS research budget. Within that total, the OAR established the AIDS research budgets for each NIH Institute and Center, in accordance with the priorities and objectives of the plan. This budget request is framed on the scientific priorities and objectives of the NIH FY 2006 Plan for HIV-Related Research. The entire plan can be found on the OAR Web site at: www.nih.gov/od/oar/public/pubs/fy2006/00_Overview_FY2006.pdf.

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The FY 2006 research agenda continues the following over-arching themes: a strong foundation of basic science; research to prevent and reduce HIV transmission, including vaccines, microbicides, and behavioral interventions; research to develop better therapies for those who are already infected; international research, particularly to address the pandemic in developing countries; and biomedical and behavioral research targeting the disproportionate impact of AIDS on minority populations in the United States. In particular, this budget request places highest priority on the discovery, development, and pre-clinical testing of additional HIV vaccine candidates. The evaluation of an AIDS vaccine will require extensive testing in the US and in international settings where there is a high incidence of HIV. High priority is placed on funding to move promising vaccine candidates into large-scale clinical trials to evaluate the potential for efficacy.

The Plan establishes the NIH AIDS research agenda in the following Scientific Areas of Emphasis: Natural History and Epidemiology, Etiology and Pathogenesis, Therapeutics, Vaccines, and Behavioral and Social Science. The Plan also addresses the cross-cutting areas of: Racial and Ethnic Minorities; Women and Girls; Microbicides; HIV prevention Research; International Research; Training, Infrastructure, and Capacity Building; and Information Dissemination.