



NEWS RELEASE

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Statement from Albert W. Morris, M.D., NMA President

VACCINE RESEARCH—ONE STEP CLOSER TO A CURE

Washington, DC, May 18, 2007----Today commemorates the tenth annual human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) Vaccine Awareness Day which offers an opportunity to review the progress made over twenty years of research for a safe and effective human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) vaccine. Although many challenges exist, with each new discovery we come one step closer. HIV vaccines in current clinical trials are among the most promising.

HIV clinical trials offer another important resource to help stop the spread of this disease. We must use every available resource to find a safe and effective HIV vaccine given the rate of this disease, especially among the African American community. HIV/AIDS continues to be a critical health crisis especially for African Americans and Hispanics. African Americans accounted for more than half (54 percent) of the estimated new HIV infections in the United States (U.S.). Combined Blacks and Hispanics account for more than two-thirds of new HIV diagnoses. Worldwide forty million people are currently living with HIV infection. In 2006, it is estimated that more than 40,000 persons in the U.S. were infected with HIV.

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) of the National Institutes of Health initiated the first HIV vaccine trial in Bethesda, Maryland, in 1987. Since that time, HIV clinical trials have enrolled more than 26,000 volunteers. These clinical trials add to the body of knowledge that helps shape future vaccine development to lead to a licensed vaccine.

Local communities play a key role in HIV vaccine research to educate their communities about HIV vaccine development and help dispel myths about HIV vaccine research.

Today, I urge all Americans to show support for HIV vaccine research. Take action by learning more about HIV vaccine research or by volunteering in a HIV vaccine clinical trial. Furthermore, everyone is strongly recommended to be tested for HIV. There are a significant number of individuals who are unaware that they are infected and have never been diagnosed.

Only through our collective cooperation and participation will an HIV vaccine become a reality and be added to the resources to fight against this disease.

For more information about local HIV Vaccine Awareness Day events, the "Be The Generation" HIV vaccine education initiative or HIV vaccine research, visit <http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/news/events/HVAD/> and <http://www.bethegeneration.org> or call 1-800-HIV-0440.

The NMA is oldest and largest organization which represents the interests of over 30,000 African American physicians and their patients. For additional information, visit www.NMAnet.org.

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