

## World AIDS Day 2010 A Time of Renewed Hope

Written by Robert ID4658

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World AIDS Day 2010 comes at a time of renewed hope in the HIV prevention field. In the past 15 months, scientific research has delivered exciting results in the fight against HIV.

A vaccine study in Thailand, a microbicide study in South Africa and a multi-country study on the use of HIV drugs to prevent infection have all demonstrated a level of efficacy that brings new hope for the prevention of HIV.

Unfortunately, many of these proven prevention techniques require specific actions to ensure their effectiveness. Condoms and microbicides need to be used when intercourse is expected, and pre-exposure prophylaxis has been tested as a daily pill. However for these techniques to be effective, people must change behaviors.

We know this is unrealistic and we understand that the AIDS epidemic will not end through any single method that requires someone to use it on a regular basis.

Vaccines hold great promise as a means to end the AIDS epidemic. Historically they been one of the most effective ways to break epidemics; this has been seen with polio, smallpox and measles, to name a few.

With a few shots, an individual is given protection that will last for several years.

Additionally, once a significant portion of a community is vaccinated, the amount of virus circulating in the community drops, providing "herd immunity" for the entire community.

And so, despite dramatic advances in many prevention strategies, research to find a safe, effective, affordable and durable vaccine to prevent HIV infection must continue. We will do this in the memory of the millions of people who have been lost to AIDS, and in anticipation of a time when loving someone no longer means fearing the risk of HIV infection.

Dr. Kublin is the Director of the HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN), based at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Washington. HVTN, funded and supported by the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the U.S. National Institutes of Health, is the largest international group conducting HIV vaccine studies in humans.

For more information:

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[www.hvtn.org](http://www.hvtn.org)