

## Dame Elizabeth Taylor, 1932–2011

Founding International Chairman, amfAR



Dame Elizabeth Taylor was one of the most inspirational figures in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In the early years of the epidemic, she brought AIDS out of the shadows and used her celebrity to shame and cajole politicians into action. An ardent and forceful advocate, Dame Elizabeth testified before Congress on the need for substantial investments in AIDS treatment, care, and research, and she raised millions for amfAR through her participation in benefit events in the U.S. and abroad.

Unfortunately, ill health prevented Dame Elizabeth from attending the amfAR New York Gala in February, when she was honored in absentia with amfAR's Award of Courage. In his tribute remarks, Sir Elton John said, "Elizabeth Taylor was a force of nature. She compelled people to listen, made them respond, urged them to act. Elizabeth Taylor has inspired every one of us and many millions of others around the world. She has shown us the meaning of courage and moral responsibility. She'll forever be our guiding star." ■

(For more on Elizabeth Taylor's extraordinary contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDS, see insert.)

## Cure Research Advancing on Multiple Fronts

Scientific interest in the search for a cure for HIV/AIDS has been building over the past few years, a groundswell that is generating a critical mass of activity among researchers and scientific organizations, including amfAR.

Special sessions at major scientific conferences on the prospects for a cure and noteworthy new commitments to research into a cure from amfAR and others are contributing to this wave of guarded optimism in the scientific community. Public interest in the subject has also been piqued by the

December 2010 publication in the journal *Blood* of a peer-reviewed paper on the "Berlin patient"—the HIV-positive man whose cure via a stem-cell transplant inspired new hope for cure research.

"This year we are finally seeing real momentum building for research towards a cure," said Rowena Johnston, Ph.D., vice president and director of research at amfAR. "amfAR has funded projects whose results have sharpened our understanding of the barriers to a cure and revealed some

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Photo: Monash University

Dr. Sharon Lewin and other amfAR researchers addressed the subject of a cure for HIV during the opening session of a recent HIV conference.

# Our Shining Star



On March 23, a luminous beacon of compassion and courageous leadership on AIDS was extinguished. The death of our Founding International Chairman, Dame Elizabeth Taylor, is a tragic and profound loss to anyone who

cares about AIDS. Even though Dame Elizabeth's ill health prevented her from making public appearances on amfAR's behalf in recent years, we feel her absence acutely.

How proud we are to have been associated with such an extraordinary human being. Dame Elizabeth embraced not the cause but the people affected by HIV/AIDS. And in those early days, to be affected by HIV/AIDS usually meant to be dying of it. She was the very embodiment of passion and compassion in equal measure. For Dame Elizabeth, it wasn't so much a fight against AIDS as it was a fight against bigotry, willful ignorance, and inaction.

Her passing adds an unexpectedly somber dimension to our commemoration of amfAR's 25 years in the forefront of the fight against

AIDS. But it also causes us to celebrate Dame Elizabeth's qualities and enormous contributions to amfAR and to people living with HIV/AIDS everywhere. The best way for us to honor Dame Elizabeth's memory is to face down prejudice and discrimination wherever we encounter them and to recommit ourselves to bringing an end to the global AIDS epidemic.

## The best way for us to honor Dame Elizabeth's memory is to recommit ourselves to bringing an end to the global AIDS epidemic.

John F. Kennedy once said, "I am certain that after the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we, too, will be remembered not for victories or defeats in battles or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit." Few have contributed as much to the human spirit as Dame Elizabeth Taylor.

  
Kevin Robert Frost  
Chief Executive Officer

# MSM Initiative Continues to Strengthen Grassroots Groups Worldwide

From the first ever study of transgender people in South Africa to prevention education for indigenous Yukpa gay men in Venezuela, amfAR's recent MSM Initiative community awards span a wide range of innovative approaches to fighting HIV among men who have sex with men (MSM).

Twenty-three grassroots groups in Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, and Africa have recently received amfAR funding for projects to boost HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention, testing, and treatment efforts within this highly vulnerable population. In addition to several first-time grantees, a number of groups are

using their awards to build on work previously funded by amfAR—a testament to the MSM Initiative's growing impact.

In Latin America, seven projects were funded, including a community health center for MSM in Asunción, Paraguay; an Internet-based radio program and blogs aimed at reaching MSM in Colombia; and a program in Honduras that will use theater as a means of educating young MSM.

Eight projects in Asia and the Pacific include HIV outreach for migrant Burmese MSM in Thailand, the first periodical for male sex workers in China, and a newsletter and

radio program to raise HIV awareness among MSM in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Among eight funded projects in Africa, two groups in Cameroon—including one receiving funding from the MSM Initiative for the fourth year in a row—are working together to extend access to HIV education and treatment for MSM. Other projects include a prevention and advocacy initiative for MSM in Zimbabwe and outreach for male sex workers and other MSM in Ethiopia. ■

*A list of all 2011 MSM Initiative Community Awards to date is available at [www.amfar.org/msm](http://www.amfar.org/msm).*

## INNOVATIONS

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# Looking Out for the Neighbors

MSM INITIATIVE STEPS INTO THE BREACH IN THE AMERICAS

The U.S. is the largest funder of HIV/AIDS programs in the world, but proximity offers no guarantees for some of its closest neighbors. Throughout much of the Americas—Central and South America as well as the Caribbean—AIDS funding is scant compared with many other regions of the world, and support for programs addressing HIV among men who have sex with men (MSM) perhaps most of all.

amfAR's MSM Initiative, in partnership with the Elton John AIDS Foundation, has stepped into the breach, committing \$1.3 million since 2007 for grassroots MSM groups fighting HIV in the Americas. One of the largest funders of AIDS programs in the region, John's foundation has supported 100 percent of amfAR's MSM awards in Latin America and the Caribbean—45 grants in 21 countries.

With MSM accounting for around 25 percent of all new HIV infections in the Caribbean and Latin America and homophobia a powerful social force, the region has desperately needed champions. Reaching out to highly diverse MSM communities, the MSM Initiative supports a broad range of projects—HIV prevention among indigenous MSM in Venezuela, sign-language HIV education in Guyana, HIV risk-reduction outreach for transgender people in Brazil, safe-sex information for MSM via radio in Colombia, behavior change programs for MSM in Haiti, and many more.

In Belize, two-time MSM Initiative grantee UNIBAM (the United Belize Advocacy

Movement) illustrates the human impact of these projects. For the last few years, UNIBAM and its executive president, Caleb Orozco, have been working with an HIV-positive volunteer named Michael (his name has been changed here to protect his privacy).

When the 20-year-old first discovered that he was positive he fell into despair and refused to seek treatment. "But accepting that he was positive helped him begin a journey toward taking care of himself and accepting his identity," said Caleb.

After joining UNIBAM in 2009, Michael began to change his life. It hasn't always come easily. "Even last year I made Caleb walk 10 feet in front of me so that no one would suspect we were friends," he admitted. But today Michael's efforts on behalf of the MSM community are making a difference. A victim of violence as a younger man, he is now working to empower MSM to defend themselves against homophobic assaults. Michael and UNIBAM are also documenting hate crimes to make a case to authorities about the dangers faced by MSM.

Not long ago Michael took up the cause of a transgender youth who was expelled from a state-funded school



*In Belize, UNIBAM's head, Caleb Orozco, discusses stigma and discrimination among MSM.*

for wearing girl's attire. By collecting documentation and advocating on behalf of the student, Michael helped UNIBAM call national attention to the issue and successfully pressure authorities to reinstate the student. And he was able to help initiate a long-overdue dialogue on trans rights in a country where same-sex sexual behavior is illegal.

The government of Belize has no official statistics on how many MSM there are in the country and there has been no direct investment in HIV programming for MSM. Largely ignored and underfunded, the HIV crisis among MSM in Belize and throughout the region has accelerated. But with the support of amfAR's MSM Initiative and the Elton John AIDS Foundation, organizations like UNIBAM, and activists like Michael, are helping to turn the tide. ■

## Together for the First Time

amfAR MSM CONSULTATION ADDRESSES THE CONFLUENCE OF RIGHTS AND HEALTH

The powerful connection between human rights and human health is exemplified in many ways by the burgeoning HIV/AIDS epidemic among stigmatized and marginalized communities of men who have sex with men (MSM). And yet advocates and policy makers who grapple with HIV, human rights, and MSM have not forged a common strategy to address the epidemic.

Addressing for the first time the integration of human rights and health in the global fight against HIV/AIDS among MSM, amfAR gathered more than 60 experts from 15 countries for a

landmark consultation in December. "Human rights and rights-based talk has become empty rhetoric," charged Mandeep Dhalwal of the United Nations Development Programme. "The challenge for this meeting is to determine how we can put them back in place."

Participating policy makers and advocates in the fields of HIV and MSM, human rights, and LGBT rights were asked for specific suggestions to help advance the human rights and HIV health needs of MSM and transgender people, who are systematically neglected in many countries and by many funders around the world.

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# Discovering and Destroying HIV Where It Hides

amfAR GRANTS AIMED AT SEARCH FOR A CURE

amfAR announced a new round of research awards in February aimed at exploring how to cure HIV infection. The eight awards will provide funds for researchers from California to Virginia and from Switzerland to Australia who are investigating new paths toward eradicating HIV.

“How the virus persists and, more importantly, how we can cure infection is one of the last frontiers of HIV/AIDS research,” said amfAR CEO Kevin Robert Frost. “These eight researchers are ideally suited to gain the upper hand over the virus and ultimately to help the scientific community find a cure for HIV/AIDS.”

The six new amfAR grantees are:

- *Nicolas Chomont, Ph.D.*, of the Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute of Florida, who will investigate the possibility that certain cell proteins can lock down an infected cell, resulting in a latent reservoir of virus that cannot be eliminated. He will also look at whether blocking these cell proteins might be a potential strategy for curing HIV infection.
- *Christina Kitchen, Ph.D.*, at UCLA, who plans to probe the relationship between virus levels and immune activation, which may contribute to the
- ability of the virus to persist even in the face of antiretroviral therapy (ART).
- *Vicente Planelles, Ph.D.*, at the University of Utah, who has developed a method to test chemical libraries consisting of tens of thousands of compounds for their ability to reactivate latent HIV so that it can be targeted by ART and/or the immune system.
- *Phillip Smith, M.D.*, at the University of Alabama, who is examining the amount of latent HIV harbored in intestinal macrophages. He hopes to determine the extent to which a viral eradication strategy targeting intestinal macrophages would contribute to a cure.
- *Didier Trono, M.D.*, at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland, who suspects that HIV recruits cell proteins to change the DNA environment surrounding the virus, thus shielding the virus from either drug therapy or the immune system. If so, this information could be used to develop drug strategies exposing HIV to destruction by ART.
- *Mudit Tyagi, Ph.D.*, at George Mason University, who will use latently infected

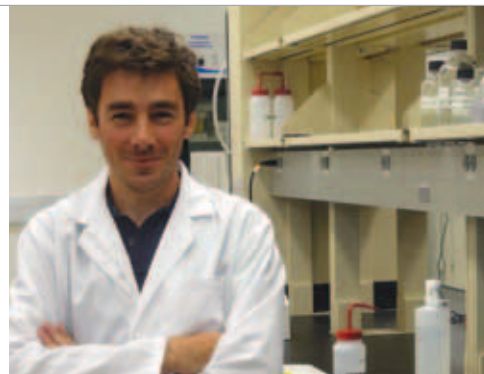


Photo: Sandrina Da Fonseca

*Nicolas Chomont will study whether certain cell proteins can lock down an HIV-infected cell, resulting in a latent viral reservoir.*

cells in a test tube to discover mechanisms that increase the likelihood that HIV infection will become latent, as opposed to replicating itself.

The two research fellowships were awarded to:

- *Victor Dahl, M.D.*, at the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden, who aims to determine whether the brain is a “sanctuary site” where HIV is protected from ART, and whether HIV harbored there grows and migrates to other parts of the body.
- *Suha Saleh, Ph.D.*, at Monash University in Australia, who will investigate whether chemokines—hormones that perform critical immune functions—play an important role in establishing HIV latency and may serve as a potential means of reversing it. ■

## Cure Research Advancing CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

promising leads to investigate. It’s immensely gratifying to see that a growing number of scientists are paying serious attention to the issue.”

In February, amfAR announced a new round of research grants for projects that will explore the mechanisms for HIV persistence even in the face of drug therapy, and the potential for HIV eradication (see *story above*). “We received a very high number of applications proposing a range of basic and clinical studies, and they came from a wider group of countries than ever before,” said Dr. Johnston.

The centerpiece of amfAR’s cure-focused research, the amfAR Research Consortium on HIV Eradication (ARCHE), will make its second round of grants in 2011, even as current ARCHE grantees push forward with a series of collaborative studies.

Awakened interest in cure research was further illustrated in December 2010 at the DART 2010 conference, where the opening session addressed the search for a cure. A number of amfAR grantees were among featured presenters, including ARCHE investigator Steven Deeks, M.D.; Daria Hazuda, Ph.D., who serves on amfAR’s Program Advisory Council; and Sharon Lewin, M.D.

The International AIDS Society (IAS) has also identified an HIV cure among its key priorities and is developing a strategy aimed at advancing the search for a cure. Dr. Johnston is serving on the project’s advisory panel, and 15 out of 31 members of the scientific working group are current and former amfAR grantees, including Dr. Deeks, who has been named co-chair along with IAS president-elect Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, Ph.D., herself a former amfAR grantee who received a Nobel Prize for the discovery of HIV. ■



# Investments in Young Researchers Pay Off

KRIM FELLOWS EMBARK ON INDEPENDENT CAREERS IN AIDS RESEARCH

More than three years after amfAR launched the Mathilde Krim Fellowships in Basic Biomedical Research, many of the young scientists who received these prestigious awards are achieving impressive success.

In an era when support for early-career scientists is drying up, these researchers are making extraordinary progress on a wide range of projects. They have also been able to leverage their amfAR funding to apply for larger grants to sustain their work, and are establishing careers as independent researchers at prestigious institutions.

**“At a critical moment in my career, the Krim Fellowship helped me move forward.”**

Among the first Krim Fellows were Rogier Sanders, Ph.D., and Felipe Diaz-Griffero, Ph.D. Both researchers have since been appointed to tenure-track positions—a path made easier, they say, by their Krim Fellowships—and both subsequently received Phase II Krim funding from amfAR, which supported their research for an additional year.

“It’s really difficult to start an independent career as a researcher, and the transition from postdoc to junior faculty is especially challenging,” said Dr. Sanders, who is using HIV’s own process of evolution to design a potential HIV vaccine. “There were a few times during the past few years when I thought about quitting science and finding a job in the private sector. At a critical moment

in my career, the Krim Fellowship helped me move forward.” He became an assistant professor at the University of Amsterdam in late 2009, and subsequently received a Vidi grant, the most prestigious career development grant for junior faculty in the Netherlands.

For Dr. Diaz-Griffero, whose studies of a protein that blocks HIV in monkeys may aid in the development of new treatments in humans, the amfAR funding he received while at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute also helped him move to the next stage of his career. “When I got the Krim Fellowship, I was able to gather data that enabled me to apply for NIH funding, which is helping

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*Navid Madani’s research into a vaginal microbicide is now continuing with support from the NIH.*



*Following his Krim Fellowship, Rogier Sanders was appointed to a tenure-track post and received a prestigious grant.*

## New Krim Fellows Test Bold New Methods to Treat and Prevent HIV

Joining the growing ranks of young researchers who have received amfAR’s Mathilde Krim Fellowships are four scientists who are developing new ways to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS and its associated conditions. The fellowship recipients will each receive \$125,000 for two years of research.

- *Matthew McNatt, Ph.D.*, of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center in New York City, is studying the interaction between an HIV-blocking cell protein called tetherin and its countermeasure, called Vpu, which stops tetherin from blocking the virus. His study of how the two proteins bind together may provide information that could be used to develop drugs against Vpu.
- *Andres Finzi, Ph.D.*, of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, is investigating the earliest stages of HIV infection—the interactions between proteins in the virus and in the cell—in order to discover potential means of disrupting infection.
- *Megan Crane, Ph.D.*, of Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, is testing the hypothesis that HIV-induced inflammatory processes may lead to liver damage—a study that could contribute to the development of therapies to halt or reverse liver disease progression in HIV patients.
- *Nicholas Maness, Ph.D.*, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is testing his theory that yet-to-be-discovered HIV proteins may serve as the basis for a possible vaccine.

# A Turning Point for HIV Prevention?

Recent scientific advances and a renewed commitment to reaching those most at risk for HIV have helped bring about a turning point in HIV prevention, agreed participants at a March 9 amfAR-sponsored Congressional briefing.

Encouraging results from studies of pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP (a daily pill to prevent infection), microbicides (topical gels), and potential vaccines offer hope that biomedical strategies may soon be added to a growing prevention arsenal. (For more on PrEP, see below.) In the U.S., the National HIV/AIDS Strategy is providing a framework for scaling up effective interventions in at-risk populations, employing strategies including behavior change and community viral load monitoring (see story opposite). And technological innovations such as targeted text messaging and bio-nano-chip technology to diagnose



*Dr. Kevin Fenton of the CDC, who described efforts to scale up HIV prevention in the U.S., with amfAR Senior Policy and Medical Advisor Dr. Susan Blumenthal and Vice President and Director of Public Policy Chris Collins*

and monitor HIV in virtually any setting worldwide are providing new opportunities to reach people at risk of infection.

The panelists, who included biomedical and socio-behavioral researchers, public health officials,

and advocates, emphasized the importance of employing multiple strategies in order to stem the tide of new infections. "In an interconnected world, we must combine scientific advances with public health approaches, sharing best practices to scale up interventions that work," noted Susan Blumenthal, M.D., M.P.A., amfAR's senior medical and policy advisor, who moderated the briefing.

An amfAR issue brief released at the meeting and titled *Accelerating an HIV Prevention Revolution: A Roadmap* details the full range of current and potential prevention strategies and offers policy recommendations for moving the field forward. ■

*The issue brief and other materials from the briefing are available at [www.amfar.org](http://www.amfar.org).*

## Landmark Study Reveals Efficacy of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis



Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) may become an important new tool for preventing the spread of HIV, particularly among gay men at high risk of infection.

A recent clinical trial has shown that taking a combination of two antiretroviral (ARV) drugs can significantly reduce the likelihood of HIV infection among gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM). The results of the trial showed an overall 43.8 percent efficacy rate among participants, with significantly higher efficacy among those who took the study drugs consistently.

The clinical trial, which began in 2007 and concluded in late 2010, involved 2,499 high-risk MSM in six countries, who took either one tablet of Truvada or a placebo once a day. The men were also offered condoms and counseling. Success rates were closely correlated with adherence, indicating that PrEP works most effectively when taken regularly.

Further research is required to answer key questions about whether PrEP can work effectively in other populations besides high-risk MSM, whether intermittent dosing may also offer protection against the virus, and the potential long-term risks of taking the drugs. Researchers and policy makers are also evaluating the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of implementing PrEP. ■

## MSM Consultation

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"The more we work in this field, the more we see that this really is a human rights issue," said U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator Dr. Eric Goosby in opening remarks. During the course of the two-day meeting, participants from Brazil, France, Guyana, India, Senegal, Tajikistan, Thailand, the U.S., and many other countries engaged in intense discussions, ultimately generating a series of concrete suggestions for the U.S. government's global AIDS program, PEPFAR, and other funders. (Those recommendations have been published in a report entitled *Integrating Rights and Health for MSM and Other LGBT People*, available at [www.amfar.org](http://www.amfar.org).)

Final recommendations included a call for the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator to release its long-awaited guidance on MSM programming, and for PEPFAR to take a firm leadership role in encouraging countries to more effectively target MSM communities. Participants also urged PEPFAR to improve its ability to detail its MSM-specific programming, budget allocations, and outcomes, none of which is now tracked independently, and they asked for a dedicated funding stream to intensify HIV treatment, care, and prevention targeting MSM. ■

# Treating Individuals, Protecting Communities

INTEREST GROWS IN COMMUNITY VIRAL LOAD MONITORING

For decades, HIV prevention has focused on individual behavior. Ad campaigns and educational programs urged people to use condoms, get tested, and avoid risky behavior such as injection drug use. Yet more than 56,000 people in the U.S. become newly infected each year, a number that has remained unchanged for a decade.

While acknowledging the continued importance of behavior change interventions, some public health officials are now broadening their approach to prevention by focusing on communities rather than individuals. A strategy known as community viral load—which allows health workers to pinpoint viral “hot spots,” get more people on treatment, and perhaps reduce new infections among those most at risk—is being adopted with promising results in highly affected cities across the U.S., most notably San Francisco.

## “This is like taking the temperature of the community.”

The strategy is rooted in research showing that individuals with low or undetectable viral loads—those on successful antiretroviral treatment—are much less infectious to others. By tracking the actual amount of virus in a given community—either a geographic area or a particular demographic group—health workers can gauge how well treatment and prevention efforts are working within that community.

Rather than simply revealing how many people are living with HIV and how many become newly infected each year, community viral load can tell officials whether these HIV infections are being well controlled by treatment. A high community viral load indicates that many people in the community are either not on treatment, not adhering to their regimens, or not responding well to treatment. This information is critical not only in making sure all those who need care are getting it, but

also in staying ahead of new infections by providing treatment that will make infected individuals less likely to transmit the virus to others.

“This is like taking the temperature of the community,” said Grant Colfax, M.D., of the San Francisco Department of Public Health, who is at the forefront of efforts to expand such monitoring. “It helps us identify disparities and target resources,” he explained at a recent amfAR Congressional briefing on HIV prevention. (See story *opposite*.)



*Grant Colfax, M.D., of the San Francisco Department of Public Health, speaking about community viral load at an amfAR Congressional briefing on HIV prevention*

Although further research is needed to confirm the community-level impact of “treatment as prevention,” evidence from San Francisco, Vancouver, and elsewhere suggests that it may be working. Total community viral load in San Francisco decreased between 2004 and 2008, most likely, experts agree, because of the city’s commitment to offering universal treatment and care. During the same period, the number of new HIV infections in the city also decreased. Notably, the number of other sexually transmitted infections such as gonorrhea increased during that time,

**“We’re all human and we slip. In an environment where there’s a lot of untreated HIV, your chances of infection when you slip are much higher.”**

suggesting that falling HIV rates cannot be explained by increased condom use.

Examining the link between new infections and high rates of untreated HIV within communities also illuminates the striking disparities that characterize the U.S. epidemic and dispels common myths about why people become infected. “A person’s risk of contracting HIV is not just about his or her individual behavior,” said Chris Collins, amfAR’s vice president and director of public policy. “It’s about community context.”

“In the black community, for example, many people aren’t getting the treatment they need,” he continued. As a result, groups such as African-American gay men have disproportionately high rates of HIV compared with white gay men because higher levels of HIV are circulating within the black community, and—as studies have established—not because they engage in riskier behavior.

For Collins, using treatment as community prevention represents a common-sense approach. “If we had an intervention that would lead everyone to use condoms all the time, it would be a different story,” he said. “But we’re all human and we slip. In an environment where there’s a lot of untreated HIV, your chances of infection when you slip are much higher. Increasing access to treatment not only helps people with HIV live longer, but also gives us an opportunity to protect more people from infection.” ■

# A Deadly Nexus

TREAT ASIA ADDRESSES CANCER AND HIV IN ASIA

People with HIV are living longer, healthier lives thanks to anti-AIDS drugs, but doctors around the world are seeing an increasing burden of cancer in this population. In Asia, where cancer can be hard to diagnose and treat because of limited medical resources, people with HIV can face a double threat.

amfAR's TREAT Asia program gathered regional and global experts in November with the aim of deepening understanding of the complex nexus of cancer and HIV. "People with HIV have a higher risk of developing certain cancers associated with other viral infections and so they can die younger," said TREAT Asia Director Annette Sohn, M.D. "The situation is amplified in Asia and other resource-limited regions."

Because of the strong association of human papillomavirus (HPV) with both anal and cervical cancers, a number of presentations addressed current research into these two illnesses. Studies have shown that HIV-positive women and men who have sex with men (MSM) are much more likely to have HPV-associated cancers. In the U.S., HPV is now preventable through a childhood vaccine, but the cost is prohibitive in Asia. "We don't have the infrastructure in Asia for cervical cancer screening in the general population, but it's desperately needed among women with HIV given the much higher risk," said Liesl Messerschmidt, TREAT Asia's director of research.

High rates of HPV-related anal dysplasia have been identified by the Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre in Bangkok via a

screening program supported by TREAT Asia. The Thai study has raised significant concerns about the extent of anal cancer risk among MSM, according to principal investigator Nittaya Phanuphak, M.D. The study is now looking at proteins associated with anal cancer in order to determine if men who are more likely to progress to cancer can be more accurately identified.

Another area of growing interest in Asia is liver cancer associated with viral hepatitis infection. Many of the local HIV epidemics in the region are connected with injection drug use and studies show that upwards of 90 percent of IDUs in Asia are also infected with hepatitis C, which puts them at risk for liver cancer; this risk is even greater in the context of HIV infection. But because the costs of treating hepatitis B and C are prohibitively high, local clinicians lack the tools to help patients who may have more problems with liver disease than with their HIV infection. ■



*A study conducted by Dr. Nittaya Phanuphak (center) and colleagues has raised significant concerns about anal cancer among MSM in Thailand.*

## Investments Pay Off CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

to support my research over the next five years," he explained. It also helped him obtain a junior faculty position at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where his Phase II amfAR funding was "essential in my first year," he said.

Just a year after Thomas Gramberg, Ph.D., received a Krim Fellowship to conduct research on the cell biology of HIV at New York University, he has already moved to the tenure track. Dr. Gramberg said that amfAR support was "very helpful" in obtaining his current job as a junior professor at the Institute for Virology at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in his native Germany—a highly prestigious position.

For Navid Madani, Ph.D., receiving a Krim Fellowship in 2009 enabled her to use innovative strategies to test potential ingredients for a vaginal microbicide to prevent HIV infection. "We didn't have

many preliminary results," she explained, "and I was working outside the box with my hypotheses." amfAR funding gave Dr. Madani an opportunity to gather preliminary data using three new technologies to identify new HIV-blocking compounds.

Dr. Madani is continuing her research at Dana-Farber with funding from the NIH, for which she was able to apply using the results from her amfAR-supported studies. "To be able to make a small contribution to the development of a female-controlled prevention method like microbicides is wonderful for me," she said.

Another 2009 Krim Fellow, Alberto Bosque, Ph.D., called the fellowship "an incredible opportunity." Dr. Bosque, whose study of a test-tube model recreating HIV's hidden reservoirs was published this winter in the journal *Methods*, was recently offered

a position on the University of Utah's faculty as a research associate professor. He and his colleagues are now adapting their test-tube model so that it can be used to screen possible compounds for use in drugs to flush out latent HIV.

As HIV/AIDS researchers move closer to solving some of the key mysteries about how the virus works, how it can be blocked from becoming established in the body, and even how it might be eradicated, the continual infusion of talent and bold new thinking remains crucial. "The successes we've seen so far from Krim Fellows have shown that a relatively small investment in the careers of young scientists can have a tremendous impact, reinvigorating the field with new ideas," said Rowena Johnston, Ph.D., amfAR's vice president and director of research. ■



# When Saving Money Means Saving Lives

MICROSAVING AMONG WOMEN IN VIETNAM

Ninh Binh province was home to Vietnam's first imperial capital in the tenth century, but its past glory means little to Chi Hong.\* An HIV-positive widow who lives with her two school-age children in a small village, she cannot regularly get her AIDS medicines locally and must travel three hours north to the modern capital, Hanoi. Supporting her family with a small vegetable stall, Chi Hong struggles to scrape together enough to pay for her trips to the doctor. Some months she has been unable to go.

Chi Hong's story is a common one in rural areas and isolated villages across Vietnam and throughout Asia. Even when healthcare is available, those under treatment for HIV must often deplete their meager savings to travel grueling distances, a burden that weighs heavily on women like Chi Hong, who contracted HIV from her now-deceased husband and raises her children alone.

Enter the Ninh Binh savings groups.

Recognizing that treatment access often hinges on the simple ability of patients to get to the doctor, Jennifer Ho, community manager of amfAR's TREAT Asia program, thought about microfinance. TREAT Asia was working closely with two HIV-positive women's self-support groups in Ninh Binh province; while the women didn't require money for business purposes, they occasionally needed modest sums to keep

their lives on track. Why not set up a savings-and-loan—a sort of borrowing collective—financed and organized by the women themselves so that they could help each other out with health-related emergencies?

Ho made a suggestion: each woman could put in 10,000 Vietnamese dong each month (about \$0.75), borrow against the fund if they needed to, and pay the loan back with only modest interest. At the end of the year, group members would get their money back with an equal share of the interest.

The women were interested but they were wary. And so to help ensure transparency and accountability, the groups developed their own guidance on the loans they would make and the process of repayment. "We suggested that not just one person keep all the money but maybe two or three, and that they could decide together who would borrow the money," said Nguyen Thi Diu of World Concern Vietnam, who

worked with TREAT Asia on the savings program. "So then it was OK. The women's groups already had a strong sense of solidarity, but now they really learned to trust each other."

The two Ninh Binh savings groups were established in mid-2009 with around 15 women in each group. Although the original idea was to support medical care, members soon decided to extend help to women like Chi



*HIV-positive widows in Vietnam saved money for health emergencies—and children's school fees—through collective savings groups developed by TREAT Asia.*

Thuy\*, a widow whose seasonal income as a rice farmer made it hard for her to pay school fees up front for her two children, one of whom is HIV positive. "Living with HIV and bringing up children is very difficult," explained Diu. "So the women agreed to lend money sometimes for school fees as well."

After one year, the two community savings projects far exceeded expectations: more than 90 percent of the women contributed to the funds on a regularly basis and they repaid 100 percent of their loans. Although the TREAT Asia project in Ninh Binh officially ended in 2010, the women's community savings projects live on. "Our goal was to help create a stronger community for HIV-positive women," said Ho. "Now they've taken that goal into their own hands." ■

*\*Chi Hong and Chi Thuy's names have been changed in this story to preserve their privacy.*



## TWO x TWO for AIDS and Art

Supporters of amfAR and the Dallas Museum of Art gathered for a week of events culminating in a gala dinner and live auction on October 23, 2010, which raised a record \$4.2 million for the two institutions.

**Special thanks:** Sotheby's, Talbots, Aston Martin of Dallas, GDT, Tim Headington/The Joule Hotel, Moët Hennessy USA, Neiman Marcus, todd.event design.creative services, The Snoring Center, Waldman Bros./Chubb Personal Insurance, and Jamie Niven, Chairman, Sotheby's North and South America (Photography by Bruno)



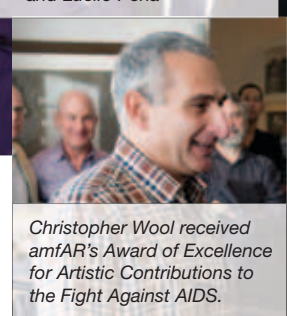
Alan Cumming gave a rousing musical performance.



Event chairs Suzanne Droese and Lucilo Peña



The gala was hosted by Howard and Cindy Rachofsky, shown at center with Stanley Tucci, the evening's host, and amfAR Chairman Kenneth Cole.



Christopher Wool received amfAR's Award of Excellence for Artistic Contributions to the Fight Against AIDS.

## The Inspiration Gala Los Angeles

amfAR's Inspiration Gala was held in Los Angeles on October 27, 2010, in a celebration of men's style. The benefit, the third in a new event series, raised nearly \$400,000 for AIDS research.

**Special thanks:** Piaget, DSquared², Audi, Wilhelmina Models (Photos: John Shearer/WireImage, Jeff Vespa/WireImage)



amfAR Global Fundraising Chairman Sharon Stone and Kevin Huvane served as chairs of the event.



amfAR supporter Dita Von Teese gave a sizzling burlesque performance.



amfAR Chairman Kenneth Cole and Adrien Brody



Kylie Minogue hosted the evening at the Chateau Marmont.



Rock icon Courtney Love performed.

## San Francisco Gala

Bay Area amfAR supporters came together on November 12, 2010, for the twelfth annual San Francisco Gala, which honored John and Marcia Goldman and Michael Tilson Thomas for their contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDS and raised nearly \$350,000 for AIDS research.

**Special thanks:** Wells Fargo, Kaiser Permanente (Photos: Drew Altizer Photography)



Michael Tilson Thomas, honored with amfAR's Award of Courage, spoke movingly about friends he had lost to AIDS.



Carson Kressley was the evening's host.



amfAR Ambassador Cheyenne Jackson gave a captivating performance of Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come."



Longtime amfAR supporters Marcia and John Goldman, who received amfAR's Award of Courage, with their daughter Jessica Goldman Foug



amfAR Chairman Kenneth Cole with event chair Maggie Rizer, who helped with the evening's live auction



## amfAR New York Gala

amfAR paid tribute to President Bill Clinton, Diane von Furstenberg, amfAR Founding International Chairman Dame Elizabeth Taylor, and Founding Chairman Dr. Mathilde Krim for their exceptional leadership in the struggle against HIV/AIDS at the annual New York Gala on February 9. The benefit, which kicked off Fashion Week, marked amfAR's 25th anniversary and raised more than \$1.4 million for AIDS research.

**Special thanks:** Hublot, M•A•C Viva Glam, Delta Air Lines, Diageo, and the Mandarin Oriental, New York (Photos: Larry Busacca/WireImage, Jemal Countess/WireImage, Kevin Mazur/WireImage, Jamie McCarthy/WireImage, Andrew Walker/WireImage)



amfAR Founding Chairman Dr. Mathilde Krim and President Bill Clinton



AIDS activist and amfAR supporter Richard Gere opened the evening.



Longtime amfAR supporter Alan Cumming teamed up with Julianna Margulies for the live auction.



Rosie O'Donnell presented a special tribute to amfAR Founding Chairman Dr. Mathilde Krim.



Sir Elton John delivered a message from Dame Elizabeth Taylor, who was unable to receive amfAR's Award of Courage in person: "I am there in spirit and I join you in saluting my fellow honorees and all these extraordinary leaders. I am inspired by their example, exhilarated by their vision, and encouraged by their compassion and love."



For the first time since 1988, Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight, Elton John, and Dionne Warwick joined together for a historic reunion performance of their Grammy-winning hit "That's What Friends Are For." It was originally recorded as a benefit single for amfAR.



Carine Roitfeld with Diane von Furstenberg, who was honored with amfAR's Award of Courage

## Fortitude Weekend



(Photo: Nancy Goldwin)

Taylor Dayne was among the performers at Fortitude, a new LGBT benefit weekend organized by the L Foundation, which took place February 17-21 in Ft. Lauderdale. amfAR received a \$100,000 donation from the event proceeds.



Chelsea Clinton, who presented the Award of Courage to her father, with her husband Marc Mezvinsky and amfAR Chairman Kenneth Cole



When amfAR awarded its first research grants 25 years ago, AIDS was nearly always a death sentence. But thanks to your generosity, amfAR-funded research has helped millions of people with HIV/AIDS live longer and healthier lives.

Now, we believe a cure is within reach.

Help us find a cure with a gift of \$25 in recognition of amfAR's 25 years.

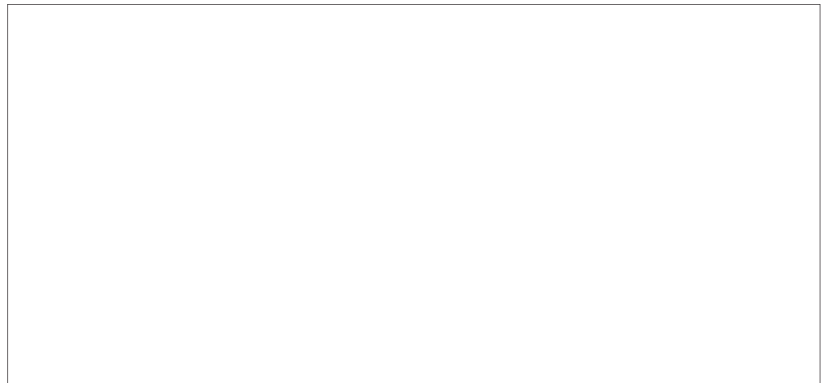
Together, we can make AIDS history.

[www.amfar.org/donate](http://www.amfar.org/donate)

## INSIDE

- Remembering Dame Elizabeth Taylor
- Momentum Building in Cure Research
- amfAR and Elton John Foundation Fight HIV in the Americas

amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research  
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## Calendar

**May 19, 2011 • Cinema Against AIDS**  
Cap d'Antibes, France

**May 21, 2011 • Life Ball**  
Vienna, Austria

**June 14, 2011 • The Inspiration Gala**  
New York City

**August 1-6, 2011 • Kiehl's Life Ride for amfAR**  
Washington, D.C. to New York City  
(with stops in Philadelphia and Boston)

**September 11, 2011 • Cinema Against AIDS**  
Toronto

**September 2011\* • amfAR Milano**  
Milan, Italy

**October 22, 2011 • TWO x TWO for AIDS and Art**  
Dallas, Texas

**October 2011\* • The Inspiration Gala**  
Los Angeles

**November 12, 2011 • San Francisco Gala**  
San Francisco

**December 4, 2011 • Artists for Life**  
Miami

*\*Dates to be announced  
For more information, visit [www.amfar.org](http://www.amfar.org).*

# INNOVATIONS

The Newsletter of amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research



SPRING 2011