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For immediate release

Bringing the HIV pandemic to zero will require a vaccine, expert says

José Esparza to deliver keynote address at upcoming meeting on overcoming vaccine development barriers

With 2.3 million new cases of HIV every year globally, including 50,000 in the U.S. alone, internationally renowned vaccine expert José Esparza says the need for an HIV vaccine is imperative to complement other preventive interventions and bring HIV/AIDS under control.

“There has been a sense that we have the tools to bring the pandemic to zero, but that’s not true. We will not be able to do that without a vaccine; how soon one is developed will depend on the decisions we make today,” says Esparza, who will soon retire from his role as Senior Advisor, Vaccines at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

In May, Esparza will deliver his first post-retirement speech at a Canadian meeting on HIV vaccine research and development. His presentation entitled “*Do We Need a New Paradigm for HIV Vaccine Development?*” will be the keynote address at the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative (CHVI) Research and Development Alliance Coordinating Office (ACO) Annual Meeting, to be held May 1, 2014 in St. John’s, Newfoundland.

Esparza, who is also an adjunct professor at the University of Maryland, has worked for decades in viral diseases and vaccine research. He says more innovative research, efficacy trials, and strong international partnerships will be the keys to successful HIV vaccine discovery.

Esparza and 12 other Canadian and international experts will address barriers to vaccine development and the innovative steps being taken to overcome them at the ACO Annual CHVI R&D Meeting.

The meeting will provide perspectives from research, regulatory affairs, pharma and international organizations — precisely the kind of multidisciplinary dialogue that Esparza has advocated for throughout his career.

“We need voices that maintain the sense of urgency regarding the search for an HIV vaccine,” he says. “Accelerating HIV vaccine discovery and development will require a concerted and collaborative effort that focuses on developing a globally relevant vaccine.”

The ACO annual meeting is being held in tandem with the 23rd Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research (CAHR 2014), where Esparza will also speak on May 2 at the CHVI – Vaccine Research Plenary. The title of his presentation for that session is “An HIV Vaccine Will be Needed to Bring the HIV Pandemic to Zero”.

The CHVI is a five-year collaborative initiative between the Government of Canada and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and represents a significant Canadian contribution to global efforts to develop a safe, effective, affordable and globally accessible HIV vaccine. The ACO was established by the Government of Canada and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2011 at the International Centre for Infectious Diseases (ICID), a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The ACO is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

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