Events and Studies at the Vaccine Clinic

The Alabama Vaccine Research Clinic is expecting a busy fall as we increase recruitment efforts for new studies and plan to attend the NIH-sponsored HIV Vaccine Trials Network Full Group Meeting in Seattle, WA in October. Working in research we have learned that the old saying is definitely true - "The busier the better." As we open more studies and recruit more volunteers, we take one more small step toward finding a vaccine to prevent HIV/AIDS.

Merck Studies to Recruit More In Fall

As we progress through the fall, two protocols sponsored by Merck & Co., Inc. will be enrolling more volunteers. These Phase I studies are looking at the safety, tolerability, and immunogenicity of a three-dose regimen of two vaccines. One study is looking at the Ad5 HIV-1 Gag vaccine and the other study is looking at the MRKAd5 HIV-1 Gag vaccine. In addition, we have a Merck Gag DNA vaccine study that is fully enrolled with 12 volunteers at UAB. According to Sherree Wright, the research nurse coordinator for these studies, "We are currently screening and enrolling volunteers for the Ad5 HIV-1 gag vaccine study and will be screening for the MRKAd5 HIV-1 gag vaccine in the upcoming months."

Letter from AVRC Director

Dear Vaccine Volunteer,

Our vaccine research program is in its seventh year...over 450 Alabamians have volunteered in 30 different vaccine trials. Progress is being made. Exciting new candidate HIV vaccines (DNA prime-live vector boost strategies) are in phase I studies, canarypox is in a pivotal phase 2 study (HVTN 203), and the VaxGen phase 3 trial is nearly two-thirds complete. These advances depend on several groups. First, thanks to all our volunteers...your commitment and generosity are inspiring...you are our most valuable asset. Second, thanks to our major sponsor...the US government National Institute of Health (NIH)...and to our industry partners, VaxGen, Merck, and MedImmune...these provide the financing and/or vaccines for our work. Finally, thanks to our wonderful staff (clinic and lab)...you are the key to making the whole operation roll forward, and you're doing a great job! In addition to testing vaccines for HIV (the cause of AIDS) and HPV (the cause of cervical cancer in women and anal cancer in men), stay tuned for a possible new study of an improved vaccine regimen for anthrax (a leading bioterrorism threat).

Best Regards,

Dr. Mulligan
The Year In Review - What Has The AVRC Been Up To?

This year has been, and will continue to be, a busy year for the Alabama Vaccine Research Clinic at UAB. The clinic has supported numerous community events, including the Apollo Ball, Rites of Spring, Southern Shootout Softball Tournament, and Pride Week, so far this year. The AVRC staff also attended many functions for these events in efforts to raise awareness for vaccine research and to recruit potential volunteers.

The AVRC has also been featured in Fox 6 news stories, various radio station advertisements, and in the UAB campus newspaper, The Kaleidoscope. As we get information about the clinic out to the community, we can increase support for efforts to find a vaccine to prevent HIV/AIDS.

The booth was used to provide information to the community on all areas of research associated with HIV/AIDS, on the facts regarding HIV/AIDS, and on safe sex practices. We handed out everything from brochures, flyers, and posters to condoms and lubricants to the people that stopped by our booth.

Conferences and Summits

The AVRC staff has been attending informational meetings to keep abreast of the many efforts to end HIV/AIDS. Staff members have attended the 5th Annual Community Summit on AIDS and African Americans in Birmingham, AL, as well as the 2001 National HIV Prevention Conference in Atlanta, GA. The AVRC will also have two members of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) attend the HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN) CAB Retreat in Seattle, WA in mid-August.

May's Vaccine Awareness Day A Success

This year's annual Vaccine Awareness Day was May 18th. The AVRC placed informational advertisements in The Birmingham News, The Black & White, and The Birmingham Times. The local efforts to call attention to the day were intensified by the efforts of the National Institutes of Health and the HIV Vaccine Trials Network. National coverage of Vaccine Awareness Day was made possible by these two groups by placing an ad in the USA Today and sending press releases all over the country.

The AVRC held its annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet in conjunction with Vaccine Awareness Day. The banquet, held at the Mountain Brook Inn, brought together over 75 volunteers, staff members, and investigators.

The clinic also teamed up with the Center for AIDS Research and the 1917 Clinic for Vaccine Awareness Day with a booth at City Stages.

Community Advisory Board Opportunities

Are you interested in getting even more involved with the Alabama Vaccine Research Clinic? The Community Advisory Board (CAB) is the ideal way to meet other concerned citizens who are working with the clinic to ensure that vaccine research is safe, productive, and reaching the farthest corners of the community. We always welcome interested people to attend CAB meetings. The next meeting will be held September 17th at 6:00 pm in the 1st Floor Conference Room of the Community Care Building (the same building that the vaccine clinic is in). Dinner will be provided at this meeting. For more information, please contact the staff liaison, Leslie Cooper, at (205) 975-2839 or lcooper@uab.edu.