

AFC in the News

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Vaccine Research

By: Rev. Doris Green, Director of Community Affairs, AIDS Foundation of Chicago

I read with disappointment the Tribune article "In AIDS fight, 2 test shots misfire; Questions follow failures of vaccine" (News, March 21), which describes recent HIV vaccine trial results as a setback in the global quest to eradicate AIDS.

The sobering news is only half as troubling as the article's explicit notion that it is futile to continue research toward an effective HIV/AIDS vaccine.

By describing the two-decade search for an AIDS vaccine as in "crisis" after the failure of a single candidate, MRK-Ad5, the article does a disservice to the public by neglecting to include a historical perspective on how vaccines are discovered.

Historically it has taken decades—with more failures than successes—from the discovery of a virus or bacteria to the creation of a vaccine.

Typhoid was discovered in 1884, but there was no vaccine until 1989.

The polio vaccine took 47 years to reach the public.

It's clear that the failure of MRK-Ad5 is a pothole on the road to a cure but not the end of the road itself.

As I explain in my community outreach, the best long-term hope for ending the AIDS epidemic is the development of safe, effective and affordable preventive HIV vaccines.

No major viral epidemic has been defeated without a vaccine.

The U.S. government should continue to invest nearly \$500 million annually in HIV vaccine research. The next setback could spur the breakthrough the world needs to stop AIDS.

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