

HHS NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
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Robert E. Windom, M.D., assistant secretary for health, today announced that five grants have been awarded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) under a new program designed to generate novel strategies for deciphering how the AIDS virus causes disease. Detailed knowledge about exactly how the virus weakens the immune system and allows numerous infections to develop is essential for devising better ways to diagnose, treat, and prevent AIDS. First-year funding for the awards totals \$6.2 million dollars.

The new effort, Programs of Excellence in Basic Research on AIDS (PEBRA), was established to mobilize into formal partnerships creative scientists in basic research. Drawing on their expertise in immunology, virology, or cellular or molecular biology, members of these partnerships are expected to develop innovative approaches for pursuing research on the pathogenesis of AIDS and its related opportunistic infections. Each PEBRA includes at least three collaborators, who may be from academic, non-profit, or commercial research institutions or organizations.

The PEBRAs are supported for 3 or 5 years by program project grants. As such, they are awarded for broadly based research programs that comprise several individual projects vital to a central research focus.

(more)

The goals of the PEBRA projects as summarized by their program directors follow:

James D. Watson, Ph.D., Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, New York: to understand at a molecular level how human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the cause of AIDS, becomes activated from a latent stage to become pathogenic.

Maxine Linial, Ph.D., Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle, Washington: to conduct an in-depth study of HIV-1 replication.

Beatrice H. Hahn, M.D., University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine: to elucidate the molecular mechanisms underlying the replication and pathogenesis of HIV-1 and HIV-2.

Opendra Narayan, D.V.M., The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland: to develop and characterize simian immunodeficiency infection of macaques as a model for studying HIV infection in humans.

Leonard Chess, M.D., College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, New York, New York: to investigate questions related to the immunologic, virologic, and molecular mechanisms important in the pathogenesis and progression of AIDS.

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