

# Preface

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September 16–18, 1998 laboratory scientists, clinicians, manufacturers of testing reagents and instruments, and public health leaders convened in Atlanta for the “1998 Conference on the Laboratory Science of HIV.” Rapid changes in testing technology coupled with advances in knowledge about the biology of HIV infection and new therapeutic approaches motivated attendance and participation in the conference.

The conference goals were to:

- learn about new laboratory science contributions to HIV diagnostic screening, HIV and AIDS monitoring, and therapeutic monitoring of HIV and AIDS treatment
- facilitate the transfer of new knowledge across laboratory science disciplines (i.e., research, surveillance, and health service delivery)
- increase communication between clinical and public health professionals
- identify where new recommendations may be needed to fill gaps in how to test, how to ensure the reliability of testing, and how to select and use tests

The conference was organized so that general principles were reviewed in the morning sessions and the details of the laboratory science were more fully explored in the afternoon sessions. On day one of the conference, experts addressed the biology and science of HIV followed by presentations about tests related to the biology and science of HIV. On day two, the focus was the immunology of HIV infection and response of the immune system to therapeutic approaches, followed by presentations about laboratory tests and methods for assessing the immune system and measuring how the virus responds to therapy. On the last day of the conference, speakers addressed testing for opportunistic disease associated with HIV infection, the importance of laboratory quality assurance globally, and a public health perspective on linkages between laboratory science and HIV infection.

The conference was successful for many reasons. The Conference Planning Committee, comprising scientists and leaders from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) worked hard to put together the agenda and to assemble world experts in HIV laboratory science to participate in this meeting. The experts who made oral presentations and conference participants who shared information in the poster sessions did an outstanding job. Most important, those who attended the conference made the conference a success by their active engagement in discussions. The willingness of so many to take time from busy schedules and to travel long distances, in some cases from places in other parts of the world, was an indication of their commitment to ensure HIV prevention is supported by the best laboratory science.