



## **Upcoming AIDSVAX Trial Results: What Will They Mean?**

Results of the first large-scale (Phase III) efficacy trial for a preventive HIV/AIDS vaccine (AIDSVAX) are about to be released. The main objective of the trial has been to determine the degree to which this candidate vaccine is effective (or ineffective) in preventing HIV infection among human volunteers, including participants enrolled in Canada (Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver).

(1) Release of the trial results could lead to public misunderstanding or confusion, depending on the way the results are explained. To explain the context and significance of the AIDSVAX trial, the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC), an independent US organization, has published a special update (available online in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese at [www.avac.org](http://www.avac.org)). Key points include:

- **Prevention efforts must continue** – No vaccine is 100 % effective. Even if AIDSVAX is partially effective, prevention measures currently used to counter the spread of HIV will remain necessary.
- **Research must continue** – HIV/AIDS vaccine research is not a short-term project. It will likely be many years before a highly effective HIV/AIDS vaccine becomes available. Continuing efforts to achieve the best possible outcomes and to minimize the possibility of harm will be necessary during this time.
- **Much has been learned for follow-up research** – Regardless of the upcoming results, the AIDSVAX trial has already provided important lessons about how best to carry out community-based, human trials of potential vaccines. Congratulations to VaxGen, and many thanks to the volunteers and community groups who have participated in this clinical trial!

(2) The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the Canadian AIDS Society have called on Health Canada to coordinate and provide funding for a Canadian HIV Vaccine Plan, and to implement this plan as quickly as possible in consultation with the community. Health Canada has indicated its intention to carry out this recommendation, but the Plan is still awaited. The need for a Canadian HIV Vaccine Plan is one of the issues examined in a background paper and series of info sheets on ***HIV Vaccines in Canada: Legal and Ethical Issues***, available at [www.aidslaw.ca/Maincontent/issues/vaccines.htm](http://www.aidslaw.ca/Maincontent/issues/vaccines.htm).

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### **Relevant Internet links:**

VaxGen: [www.vaxgen.com](http://www.vaxgen.com)  
AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition: [www.avac.org](http://www.avac.org)  
International AIDS Vaccine Initiative: [www.iavi.org](http://www.iavi.org)  
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network (vaccine page): [www.aidslaw.ca/Maincontent/issues/vaccines.htm](http://www.aidslaw.ca/Maincontent/issues/vaccines.htm)