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## AHF to Take a Leading Role in HIV/AIDS Research

*Respected AIDS researcher and clinician **Dr. Otto O. Yang**, Professor and Associate Chief of Infectious Diseases at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, to serve as the inaugural Scientific Director*

*The Institute will focus on translating basic science immunology research into human clinical trials. Given the current shortage of funds for research in general as well as the opportunities for innovation in immunotherapies, the Institute for Immunotherapeutic Research will be a vehicle for developing novel HIV therapeutics and provide starting points for refining successful therapies or suggest other novel approaches that could lessen the dependence upon current anti-retroviral medicines.*

*Dr. Yang to also present talk: "A Vaccine for HIV: 31% There?," at next L.A. Intercity HIV Rounds, Wednesday, September 5th, 6:30 p.m., Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center*

LOS ANGELES (August 27, 2012)—[AIDS Healthcare Foundation \(AHF\)](#) is pleased to announce that respected AIDS researcher and physician [Otto O. Yang, M.D.](#), Professor and Associate Chief of Infectious Diseases at the [David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA](#), will serve as inaugural Scientific Director of the **Institute for Immunotherapeutic Research**, a new HIV/AIDS research institute sponsored by AHF that will focus on translating basic science immunology research into human clinical trials. Dr. Yang will steer AHF's research efforts while maintaining his academic position at UCLA.

The long-term objective will be to pave the way for the next big leap in treating and/or preventing HIV infection, and AHF is honored to have as distinguished a scientist, scholar and physician as Dr. Yang serve as the inaugural scientific director to lead us towards this goal, said **Michael Weinstein**, President of AIDS Healthcare Foundation. In this era of severely diminishing research funding and increasing politics in HIV/AIDS research, AHF is poised to take a leading role in pushing ahead research to understand how the immune system interacts with HIV, with a focus on novel therapeutics based on enhancing the body's own defenses.

Dr. Yang brings over twenty years experience as a physician and HIV/AIDS researcher, said **Dr. Wayne Chen**, Acting Chief of Medicine and Senior Medical Director of Managed Care for AIDS Healthcare Foundation. His broad career has ranged from treating destitute patients dying of AIDS during the height of the epidemic at Bellevue Hospital in New York, to performing basic scientific research at Harvard and UCLA resulting in more than 100 peer-reviewed scientific publications. He is internationally respected, and served as an expert consultant to the National Institutes of Health, the HIV Vaccine Trials Network, and other prominent research organizations in the field of HIV/AIDS research.

Dr. Yang will coordinate scientific activities at AHF, which is poised to take a leading role in groundbreaking HIV/AIDS research. This is both an exciting and disappointing time in this research field, said **Dr. Yang**. We have become complacent in this country, while over 30 million people are infected with HIV worldwide, with over 2 million new infections and almost 2 million deaths a year. Ironically, knowledge about the disease has exploded and technical advances are bringing tools such as gene therapy and new vaccine approaches within reach, but research funding is shrinking and few centers have the resources or political will to build the infrastructure for long term projects or testing new

ideas in human trials. With its keen focus on HIV/AIDS and its commitment to finding novel alternatives to antiretroviral drugs, AHF is poised to step in and push ahead.+

The overall goal for AHF under Dr. Yang's scientific leadership is to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and clinical treatments. "Antiretroviral drugs have had a remarkable impact on living with HIV, but we are reaching the limits of this approach," commented **Dr. Yang**. "AHF will focus primarily on research that modifies or harnesses the immune system to prevent or contain HIV infection. Within the wealth of knowledge accumulated from in vitro and animal studies regarding the basic biology of infection lies the key to such a strategy. Human proof-of-concept trials are needed both to advance our knowledge and to develop useful therapies. AHF, its medical team of providers and nurses, and its patients have already made great contributions to research that has led to the current era of successful treatment. It is exciting now to join forces with them to define a new era.+

### **Observational Clinical Research:**

AHF cares for a tremendous base of persons with HIV infection in the U.S. and throughout the world. This clinical experience, spanning decades, is a rich source of clinical information about HIV, and will be explored so that the lessons learned can be shared. Additionally, AHF will focus on particularly important groups of patients, such as those who remain healthy without treatment, to build a large specimen repository accessible to scientists from around the world. AHF will implement a research funding program to support innovative and important ideas from top scientists.

### **Translational Clinical Research:**

A key goal will be to move research directly into humans. Promising ideas are ripe for testing as therapeutics, yet languishing for lack of coordination and resources. Examples are plentiful:

- A patient transplanted with bone marrow from a person lacking a key receptor for HIV infection has been functionally cured; multiple technologies to remove this receptor from cells via gene therapy have been developed, yet only one strategy has been tried at one academic institution.
- Specific antibodies against HIV have been shown to block infection efficiently in animal models, and technologies exist to deliver these antibodies or genes for the antibodies to animals, but they have yet to reach the clinic despite the fact that other antibodies have been hugely successful for treating other human diseases.
- Cellular immune responses have been shown to be crucial for containing disease, and new technologies have been developed to elicit or deliver genes for such responses, yet application in humans has been stalled despite the use of gene delivery to generate cellular immune responses for the treatment of cancers.

AHF intends to build the infrastructure and provide the resources to facilitate the translation of these concepts into the clinic.

### **Future:**

As government resources for research shrink, AHF will play a key role in the future of HIV research. Just as the [Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center](#) contributed to basic scientific research at a time of need in the 1980s leading to the current era of successful antiretroviral treatment, AHF will fulfill the new need for moving basic science to the bedside by funding the critical infrastructure of long-sighted research. This infrastructure will be the base for testing and growing ideas to usher in a new era in HIV prevention and therapeutics.

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## ***MEDIA ADVISORY:***

***"A Vaccine for HIV: 31% There?"***  
*L.A. Intercity HIV Rounds presentation by Dr. Otto Yang*

WHAT: Los Angeles Intercity HIV Rounds\*:  
***"A Vaccine for HIV: 31% There?"*** talk by Dr. Otto Yang

WHEN: Wednesday, September 5, 2012, 6:30 p.m.

WHERE: Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center  
1300 N. Vermont Ave. Los Angeles CA 90027

NOTE: Due to limited seating, please RSVP with number of attendees  
[Steven.cauley@aidshealth.org](mailto:Steven.cauley@aidshealth.org)  
\* Buffet style dinner provided

\* AIDS Healthcare Foundation is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education and we do designate one AMA PRA Category 1 Credit(s) .

**About AIDS Healthcare Foundation**

**AIDS Healthcare Foundation** (AHF), the largest global AIDS organization, currently provides medical care and/or services to more than 176,000 individuals in 27 countries worldwide in the US, Africa, Latin America/Caribbean, the Asia/Pacific Region and Eastern Europe. To learn more about AHF, please visit our website: [www.aidshealth.org](http://www.aidshealth.org), find us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/aidshealth](http://www.facebook.com/aidshealth) and follow us on Twitter: [@aidshealthcare](https://twitter.com/aidshealthcare). Please address any directions regarding the Institute to: [otto.yang@aidshealth.org](mailto:otto.yang@aidshealth.org) or call 323.860.5200.