Ensuring Worldwide Access to an HIV Vaccine in the Future
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Abstract:

As candidate HIV vaccines are now entering phase III efficacy trials, it is hopeful that a successful vaccine is only a few years away from being found. With around 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS, and an estimated 14,000 new infections every day, it is believed that such a scientific discovery is the best hope to control the pandemic. However, organisations such as the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) recognise that the availability of a medical technology does not automatically assure access to every person that needs it. The historical paradigm of pharmaceutical access shows that it typically takes a drug or vaccine 15-20 years from initial licensure, to when it reaches the developing world at a modest level. To break this paradigm, changes must be made in almost every aspect of immunisation deployment.

The key parties involved include governments of both industrialised and non-industrialised countries, potential vaccine producers, IAVI, UNAIDS, WHO and many other organisations. The various endeavours made by each of these groups to prepare for the arrival of an HIV vaccine are collected together from the relevant literature. This creates a more complete picture of the overall impact of efforts to date, than has otherwise been developed.

The world is still far from prepared to swiftly introduce an HIV vaccine to developing nations. Although delayed access to such a life-saving product raises questions regarding justice and equity, there are economic, political and social reasons for this. To overcome these barriers, the importance placed on disease prevention must be increased. HIV vaccination is a global health issue, thus all sectors of global society must join together to ensure worldwide access once it is ready.