

Suggested Questions for Elias Zerhouni, MD
1/20/07

- Now that the death rate from HIV disease has plummeted throughout the USA, as evidenced by a 99% decrease in California's newly infected patient deaths from just under 10,000 to 118 as of 12/31/06,¹ isn't it now time to consider re-distributing a portion of HIV research funding, now at ten percent of the entire budget, to other diseases? Isn't this especially appropriate with the budgetary constraints in place (Iraq war, Katrina, etc.) that have not allowed for overall increases in NIH funding?
- The Director of the NIAID, Dr. Fauci, has stated the following recently on CNN, **"...the scientific advancements that have been made in HIV [research] are breathtaking [with] highly effective drugs to suppress HIV to the point where what was a death sentence in the early eighties to now having patients who look and feel well, who are leading very productive, very gratifying lives..."**² Doesn't Dr. Fauci himself make the case for a need to shift funding to other diseases that have not had such "breathtaking advances"?
- There are over sixteen diseases³ that now kill a million more Americans than HIV disease annually, yet HIV disease still receives ten percent of the entire NIH biomedical research budget. In addition, there are over 6,000 orphan diseases⁴ that cause great suffering and their NIH funding of \$1.19 billion⁵ averages \$200,000 per illness. Alzheimer's kills five times as many as AIDS in this country and diabetes kills more than AIDS and breast cancer combined, yet those two are receiving \$143 and \$50 per patient in research versus \$3,040 for each HIV/AIDS patient.⁶ Do you feel that these inequities are fair and equitable and if not, what are your recommendations for reversing this situation?
- Although you are Director of the NIH and its 27 Institutes and Centers, you are restricted in your ability to redirect HIV/AIDS funding from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) to other Institutes involved with non-AIDS research. Do you think this is appropriate and if not, what suggestions might be made to the Subcommittee to reverse this situation and give you, the NIH Director, the ultimate say in where funding is to be directed?
- UNAIDS,⁷ Presidents Bush and Clinton⁸ and Dr. Fauci have stated publicly that the solution to HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa is prevention education, providing the existing HAART treatment and setting up infrastructures to deliver these remedies that have worked so well in the USA. Yet in your office's correspondences to the FAIR Foundation,⁹ you have made the argument that more research funding is necessary. If

HAART was distributed in Africa as it has been in the USA, wouldn't it be reasonable to expect plummeting death rates there as well without any increases in HIV research funding?

- With taxpayer dollars, the NIAID recently launched television commercials¹⁰ in 14 U.S. cities that essentially lobby for preventive HIV vaccine research. Since the solutions to HIV disease are well known (prevention & providing the existing HAART treatment), isn't it unfair to allow the NIAID to now spend its billions of dollars (annually) on vaccine research when thousands of other diseases have not achieved the successes described by Dr. Fauci when he called AIDS research advancements "breathtaking" with AIDS patients living normal lives?
- With the \$29 billion Bill Gates Foundation having received \$39 billion from Warren Buffett and Gates now spending hundreds of millions on HIV vaccine research and billions overall for HIV disease, isn't the favoritism afforded this disease disproportionate?¹¹

¹ <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/aids/Statistics/pdf/Stats2006/Dec06AIDSMerged.pdf>

² http://fairfoundation.org/CNN_Fauci.wmv

³ <http://www.fairfoundation.org/thesixteen.htm>

⁴ <http://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/>

⁵ <http://fairfoundation.org/nih.htm>

⁶ <http://www.fairfoundation.org/factslinks.htm>

⁷ http://fairfoundation.org/news_letter/2006/05dec/pirot.pdf

⁸ http://fairfoundation.org/news_letter/2006/04sept/clinton_testing.pdf

⁹ http://fairfoundation.org/news_letter/2006/04sept/zerhouni_2006letter.htm

¹⁰ http://fairfoundation.org/news_letter/2006/05dec/nih_vaccine_PR_campaign.htm

¹¹ http://fairfoundation.org/news_letter/2006/04sept/newsletter.htm