



These are some of the most important events that have occurred in the history of AIDS over the period 1993-1997.

1993 History

In January the Russian ballet star Rudolf Nureyev died of AIDS. In February the tennis player Arthur Ashe also died, less than a year after announcing that he had been infected with the virus.

A European trial known as Concorde, found that AZT was not after all a useful therapy for HIV positive people who have not yet developed symptoms.

1994 History

The filmmaker Derek Jarman died of AIDS, and the actor Tom Hanks won an Oscar for playing a gay man with AIDS in the film Philadelphia.

A study, ACTG 076, showed that AZT reduced by two-thirds the risk of transmission of HIV from infected mothers to their babies.

AIDS had become the leading cause of death amongst Americans between the ages of 25 and 44. 400,000 people in the United States had developed AIDS since 1981, and over 250,000 people had died.



1995 History

The Delta trial was a major clinical trial of combination antiretroviral therapy. In September 1995 the results of that trial showed that combining AZT with ddI or ddC, did provide a major improvement in treatment compared with AZT on its own. The success of this approach was confirmed by other studies and treatment with dual combination therapy became the standard approach to treatment.

The FDA also during the year approved the use of Saquinavir, the first of a new group of Protease Inhibitor antiretroviral drugs. They also approved the use of 3TC in combination with AZT, and by the end of the year Saquinavir had been authorised for use in combination with the nucleoside analogue group of antiretrovirals.

For years the World Health organisation (WHO) had led the international campaign against AIDS. However, it had become increasingly criticised for doing too little at grass-roots level and for focusing too narrowly on medical issues and vaccines. The WHO global program on AIDS was as a result closed at the end of 1995, to be replaced at international level by UNAIDS.

1996 History



The Joint United Nations (UN) Programme on AIDS (UNAIDS) became operational in January 1996. UNAIDS was designed to combine and replace the AIDS work previously undertaken by the WHO Global Program on AIDS, the UN Children's Fund, the UN Population Fund, the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the UN Development Program and the World Bank.

Magic Johnson returned to professional basketball as an active player. Just one month later the heavyweight boxer Tommy Morrison was identified as HIV positive after being tested prior to a fight, and as a result he was totally barred from the ring everywhere.

During 1996 an increasing number of drugs received approval from the FDA in the United States, both for use on their own, and/or in combination with other drugs. Another treatment development that had taken place was the viral load test which provided information about the risk of disease progression.

By the time of the international AIDS conference in Vancouver it had also begun to be realised that triple combination therapy, that is three drugs taken together was likely to be even more effective than dual therapy. Three drugs were more likely to suppress the virus, to prevent it from replicating, and so prevent the development of drug resistance.

This was a time of great optimism with respect to the treatment of HIV infection and AIDS but there were still a number of unknown factors and difficulties. These included the question of how long the effect of the drugs would last, the side-effects of the drugs, and when several drugs were being taken together the complicated regimes that needed to be followed.

At the end of the year UNAIDS reported that the number of new HIV infections had declined in many countries due to safer sex

practices, although world-wide the rate of infections continued to grow rapidly. Countries that reported a successful slowing of the epidemic included the United States, Australia, New Zealand, northern European countries and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The first AIDS hospice founded in San Francisco closed because fewer people were dying of AIDS in the United States as a result of the new treatments.

1997 History

The FDA granted approval for delavirdine, the first in the latest group of drugs, the non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors.

But also during the course of the year it became apparent that the number of people affected by the side effects of the protease inhibitor drugs was greater than had previously been thought. It was also clear that some of the side effects could be serious with the FDA issuing a specific warning concerning diabetes and hyperglycemia in patients receiving protease inhibitors. The development of drug resistance also continued to be of considerable concern, with many of the new drug combinations being extremely complicated and quite difficult to permanently take.

However, for many people with HIV who had access to the new drug combinations, and who could take them without serious side effects, the new drugs continued to bring extended life as well as renewed hope. World-wide though, the vast majority of people did not in 1997 have access to any antiretroviral drugs at all.

At the end of the year, UNAIDS reported that world-wide the HIV Epidemic far worse than had previously been thought. Updated surveillance techniques suggested that 30 million people were now

living with HIV/AIDS and 16,000 new infections were occurring every day.

World-wide, 1 in 100 adults of the 15-49 age group were thought to be infected with HIV; and only 1 in 10 infected people were aware of their infection. It was estimated that by the year 2000 the number of people living with HIV/AIDS will have grown to 40 million.

It was also estimated that 2.3 million people died of AIDS in 1997 - a 50% increase over 1996. Nearly half of those deaths were in women, and 460,000 were in children under 15. UNAIDS reported that they considered that in terms of AIDS mortality the full impact of the epidemic was only just beginning.

These are only a few of the important events that happened during this period in the history of AIDS. If there are other historical events you think should be included then do please [email](#) and let us know.

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