AIDS Vaccine Science: What's all the buzz about?

Training Session

May 2014

INTRODUCTION

Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will have built skills and confidence in discussing the latest and most important developments in the AIDS vaccine research and development field.

Method

Buzz groups

Materials Required

Flip chart paper and markers

Handouts

- *AIDS Vaccine Key Messages, HIV Vaccine Awareness Day 2014*
- *AIDS Vaccine Science for Busy Advocates Series*
  - *Vaccine R&D Pipeline*
  - *RV144: Building on a breakthrough*
  - *Antibody Research: Progress on a powerful immune response*
  - *Passive Immunization: An important piece of the puzzle*
- *AVAC Report 2013*

Time Required

60 minutes

Optimal Group Size

24-40 training participants

> **Important Note to Trainer:**
>
> This is a relatively advanced session for HIV prevention research advocates. For beginner audiences, we recommend that you first lead a discussion on HIV vaccine basics. Please refer to the list of references; AVAC's PowerPoint presentation, *AIDS Vaccines: The basics* is very useful for lay audiences. You may also consider providing copies of relevant materials to participants.

TRAINING INSTRUCTIONS

Preparation

1. Read through the *AIDS Vaccine Science for Busy Advocates* handout series and the section on vaccines in *AVAC Report 2013* (pp. 21-26). Be sure you are comfortable with all content. If not, reach out to a local expert, colleague, or your AVAC contact person to discuss any questions.
2. Gather flip charts and markers.
3. Make a copy of handouts for each participant.

4. Collect a copy of the *AVAC Report 2013* for each participant. (If you need copies of materials, please contact AVAC at www.avac.org/orderpublications.)
5. Co-facilitation for this session is recommended; identify and coordinate with a co-facilitator.

Helpful resources:

- AVAC's *Resource Database*
- *AIDS Vaccine Literacy "VaxLit" Toolkit*: http://www.iavi.org/Information-Center/Publications/Pages/Vaxlit-Toolkit.aspx

Delivery

STEP ONE, less than 5 minutes: Introduce the session by making points such as the ones listed below. Try to get trainees involved in the introduction—if you know some of your trainees are familiar with the content, prompt them to make points.

What are some of the key messages for vaccine research right now?

- We know that a vaccine remains crucial to ending the AIDS epidemic.
- However, the timeline around when a vaccine will be available is unclear.
- There have been many challenges in vaccine research. Some people think that we are too far behind and wonder if an HIV vaccine is even possible.
- However, we remember that vaccine research is always a long process. All vaccines take decades to develop. The polio vaccine took almost 50 years to develop.
- The past several years have brought important scientific advances in the vaccine field, and reason to believe that an effective vaccine is possible.
- One key focus in clinical trials is referred to as the P5, a suite of trials building on promising results of the RV144 trial. The P5 includes trials in Thailand and Southern Africa, some of which will aim toward licensure of a product like the one tested in RV144. Timelines for these trials, in particular efficacy trials, continue to extend; the next efficacy trial is currently planned to begin in Southern Africa around early 2017.
- The latest strategy to be tested in efficacy trials, vaccines based on an Adenovirus5 (Ad5) vector, did not show efficacy. The field will no longer test Ad5-based vaccine candidates. We are working together to learn as much as possible from these results and to improve monitoring of the potential effects of candidate vaccines as they move through various phases of trials.
- Basic science, while exploratory, shows promise. Researchers continue to discover broadly neutralizing antibodies, and newer vector strategies such as replicating vectors and alternate virus vectors are also moving forward.
- As advocates and stakeholders in the HIV vaccine research field, it's important that we understand these scientific details, and that we are able to communicate them to others.

STEP TWO, approx. 20 minutes: Distribute the 'Key Messages' handout and give participants 5-10 minutes to review it. Lead a brief, participatory discussion around the messages. Distribute and review any of the *Busy Advocates* factsheets that may be relevant. Use flip charts to write key points and draw helpful graphics.

→ SUGGESTION: You may want to write each word in the 'Glossary' section of the Busy Advocates Fact Sheets on a flip chart and ensure that the group understands the terms.

→ TIP: Avoid reading through the handouts aloud. Instead, make this an interactive discussion where you engage trainees in the information. Make sure to answer questions or probe participants if they seem confused.

STEP THREE, approx. 10 minutes: Ask participants to stand and pair up with someone across the room. Tell them that they will have several minutes with their partner to review the handouts and come up with three key points about the current state of HIV vaccine research and why they are important for moving the field forward.

Some questions you may use to probe:

- Why was the RV144 trial noteworthy? How did it change the HIV vaccine field?
- Why are we focusing so much on neutralizing antibodies now, as opposed to when HIV vaccine research first began?
- What key lessons are we learning from HVTN 505, Phambili, and Step--the three efficacy trials testing Ad5-based vaccines?
- Why didn't RV144 lead to licensure of the vaccine tested in the trial? How are planned follow-up studies addressing this?
- Why is passive immunization promising for the vaccine field? Name two major points.

Have them develop easy-to-understand messages around the science and why it is important. Encourage pairs to role-play, practicing how they would explain the information to someone hearing it for the first time, to someone who has questions about vaccine research, or to someone who is a key decision maker in the field.

Circulate and help the pairs as they work.

STEP FOUR, approx. 10 minutes: Now, ask each pair to group with another pair, making a group of 4. (If you have an odd number of pairs, have one group of 3 pairs.) Give them 5 minutes to share with each other the messages they developed in the first round.

Next, ask the following: Were points the same or different? Were explanations understandable? What did each pair learn from each other?

Ask the groups to talk for a few more minutes about what they learned from each other, and to agree together about the strongest points and clearest messages.

STEP FIVE, approx. 10 minutes: Complete one more round, where each group of 4 pairs with another to form groups of 8. (Again, if you have an odd number of 4-person groups, have one group of 12.)

This time, challenge them to a competition. First, each 4-person group shares their strongest messages from the last round. Next, the full group develops one comprehensive "elevator speech" about why the scientific issues they've identified are so important, and why they make the case for continued support to the vaccine field. Remind them that an elevator speech must be very short, usually no more than 1 minute. They will come together and present their remarks to the full group. The group with the most concise, convincing elevator speech is the winner.

STEP SIX, approx. 10 minutes: Bring all groups together. Ask each group to present their speech. Have a timekeeper record time using a stopwatch.

When each group is done, ask for feedback from the full group on the following:

- The time of their speech – too short? Too long?
- Relevance of their scientific points – are these the most important questions to answer today?
- Clarity – was the speech understandable to a lay audience?

CLOSING

Close by asking participants to share something they learned from another group, or something that was explained in a very understandable way. Make note of any unanswered questions or necessary follow-up.

TRAINER'S NOTES

About AVAC | AVAC is a non-profit organization that uses education, policy analysis, advocacy and a network of global collaborations to accelerate the ethical development and global delivery of new HIV prevention options as part of a comprehensive response to the pandemic.