



Welcome from the Chair

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 1st International Symposium on Natural Immunity to HIV. I thank each and every one of you for being here today. I am confident that with all of us here, working together, we can help HIV research progress faster.

The Gates Foundation has provided incredible opportunities for researchers to make a tangible difference in the lives of people suffering from disease around the world. We sincerely appreciate their support in creating the opportunity we have here today.

While it may not be news to those in the room, many citizens of developed nations would be surprised to learn that 25% of deaths worldwide are still due to infectious diseases, a considerable number of which are preventable. As you know, HIV disease still makes a significant contribution to this statistic.

It's very concerning to see many people becoming more complacent about HIV as infected individuals live longer and longer due to advancements in treatment. Those of us in this room cannot become complacent; I remain convinced that we can eventually eradicate this atrocious disease and I know we are taking steps toward that goal by being here today.

There have been tremendous advances in our understanding of the HIV/AIDS virus since it was first identified, but yet an effective vaccine still eludes us. I believe that we can maximize the long-term benefits and impact of this symposium by creating a consortium that will drive new and expanded international research activities to build the scientific knowledge that will lead to an HIV/AIDS vaccine. Over the course of this symposium, I hope you will consider how we might be able to do this and then we can talk further about it before we disperse tomorrow.

Before I conclude, I'd like to formally welcome you to Winnipeg. As many of you may know, we have a long history of strong infectious disease research here and I'm proud to note that a great deal of pioneering work in HIV/AIDS has come from our scientists. We continue to build our life sciences community here based on this strong foundation.

I'd also like to thank the organizers of the symposium, the International Centre for Infectious Diseases, and acknowledge the support of not only the Gates Foundation but also the Public Health Agency of Canada and the University of Manitoba.

Thank you. Now, let's see what we can do to stop this devastating disease.

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