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Wistar Institute gets \$23M for HIV research project

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3D generated illustration of HIV Aids virus cells for medical science background

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The National Institutes of Health awarded Philadelphia biomedical research organization, The Wistar Institute, with \$23 million grant that brings together more than 30 of the nation's leading HIV investigators to work on finding a cure for the virus.

"The lifelong stigma, economic burden on society, strain on healthcare resources, and sheer toll on human life across the globe makes finding a cure a top priority," said [Luis Montaner](#), director of HIV-1 Immunopathogenesis Laboratory at The Wistar Institute Vaccine Center, in a statement. "Together we're building on our teams' extensive established efforts to move forward and make those next transformative steps that will bring us closer to an HIV cure."

The grant, called BEAT-HIV: Delaney Collaboratory to Cure HIV-1 Infection by Combination Immunotherapy, is one of six awarded by the NIH as part of the Martin Delaney Collaboratories for HIV Cure Research.



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The five-year award allows the Philadelphia-based BEAT-HIV Delaney team to lead three distinct studies, all focused on investigating where HIV hides after therapy and test possible cures for the virus.

Researchers for the Wistar-led study come from the University of Pennsylvania, which is a co-principal investigator; Philadelphia FIGHT, a nonprofit dedicated to AIDS awareness, research, education and advocacy; Rockefeller University; VA San Diego Healthcare System; Johns Hopkins University; the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; and the University of Utah. The investigators will also work with government and industry partners.

The first study, or pillar as Wistar called it, will address where HIV is hiding by "fingerprinting" or "barcoding" infected cells to see where they end up post-treatment in a preclinical trial. Three research teams are connecting to focus on this pillar.

The second pillar is the first human clinical trial that combines two therapeutic strategies, highly-potent antibodies and pegylated interferon alpha 2b. They have yet to be tested together, but separately both have shown "activity in reducing HIV in humans," according to Wistar. These researchers also aim to develop DNA-based delivery systems that could simplify the administration of anti-HIV treatments.

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