

# Cuba to test new AIDS vaccine on humans

March 6 2012

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Cuba's top biotech teams have successfully tested a new AIDS vaccine on mice, and are ready to soon begin human testing, a leading researcher told a biotechnology conference in Havana on Monday.

"The new AIDS trial vaccine already was tested successfully (on mice) and now we are preparing a very small, tightly controlled phase one clinical trial" with HIV-positive patients who are not in the advanced stages of disease, researcher Enrique Iglesias said.

Iglesias, who heads up the vaccine development team at the Biotech and Genetic Engineering Center (CIGB) here, was speaking at the International Biotech Conference-Havana 2012, which started Monday in Cuba's capital.

He told the crowd at the convention center that the vaccine TERA-VAC-HIV-1 was made from [recombinant proteins](#) aiming "to cause a [cellular response](#) against the (HIV) virus."

While upbeat, the Cuban expert was quick to downplay high hopes for a long-awaited successful AIDS vaccine.

"So far, there have been more than 100 [clinical tests](#) (on humans) with HIV" in Cuba and other countries, "and all of them have failed," he stressed.

Cuba, the Americas' only one-party Communist-ruled state, spends more than \$200 million a year on its [AIDS prevention](#) and care programs,

including free care with antiretrovirals, some of them Cuban-made.

The CIGB, which groups about 20 research units on Havana's leafy western end, is the engine behind a major Cuban export: biotech products including vaccines and other drugs.

The Caribbean country exports \$400 million a year in these products, making them its official number-two export after nickel.

Some 600 scientists from about 38 countries are taking part in the event including Nobel-winning US chemist Peter Agre, also a medical doctor and [molecular biologist](#).

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Citation: Cuba to test new AIDS vaccine on humans (2012, March 6) retrieved 10 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-03-cuba-aids-vaccine-humans.html>

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