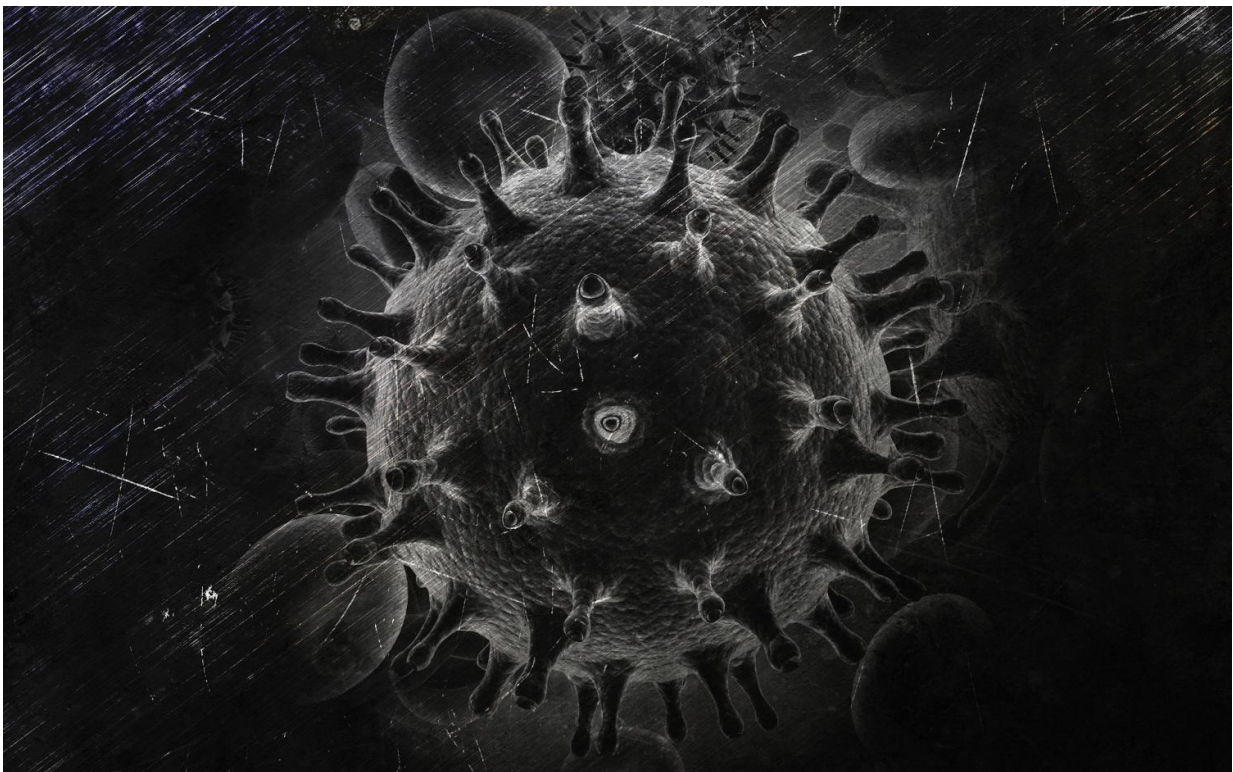


Marking the 40th anniversary of the AIDS epidemic: A paper in the New England Journal of Medicine

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June 5, 2021 marks the 40th anniversary of the first report of AIDS cases and the onset of the American AIDS epidemic. In a new, thought-provoking paper in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Professor

Ronald Bayer and co-author Gerald Oppenheimer capture the experiences of the physicians who were central to the AIDS epidemic. In the words of the doctors, they relay what it meant to look back after 40 years and how they "aged together."

The doctors called their experiences extraordinary and the conditions demanding, under which they performed their duties and treated their patients. They speak of their work as "in the trenches," giving their careers immediate meaning and value that they never expected. As several physicians expressed, "The [epidemic](#) changed me in about every considerable way possible." And for some, their lives in medicine were bookended by another extraordinary moment in global health—the COVID-19 epidemic.

Dr. Ronald Bayer, professor of Sociomedical Sciences and co-director of the Center for the History and Ethics of Public Health at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, focuses his research on issues of social justice and ethical matters related to AIDS, tuberculosis, illicit drugs, and tobacco. An elected member of the Institute of Medicine of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, he has served on its committees dealing with the social impact of these issues in addition to vaccine safety and the Ryan White Care Act. Dr. Bayer has been a consultant to the World Health Organization on [ethical issues](#) related to public health surveillance, HIV and tuberculosis.

The Commentary is titled "Marking the 40th Anniversary of the AIDS Epidemic: American Physicians Look Back." A co-author is Valentina Parisi.

Provided by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health

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