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Global Challenges | Gates Foundation Gives Glaser Foundation \$9.7M for Research on Pediatric HIV Vaccines; Research To Focus on Breast-Feeding Infants [May 18, 2007]

The [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) has awarded the [Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation](#) a five-year, \$9.7 million grant to research and develop experimental HIV vaccines aimed at children, Glaser Foundation President and CEO Pamela Barnes announced Friday on HIV Vaccine Awareness Day, the [AP/Houston Chronicle](#) reports. The research will focus on preventing mother-to-child transmission of the virus through breastmilk, according to the Glaser Foundation. The grant will fund eight research studies and up to three pediatric clinical trials of HIV vaccines previously tested among adults. Barnes said nearly 14% of all new HIV cases worldwide occur among infants who contract the virus from their mothers, most of whom rapidly develop AIDS because they lack treatment access (Gordon Blankinship, [AP/Houston Chronicle](#), 5/18). The preclinical research studies will examine issues related to HIV transmission through breastmilk and pediatric immunity.

Researchers have found that an effective vaccine, provided shortly after birth, would not only protect an infant from contracting HIV while breast-feeding but also could offer long-term or even life-long immunity from the virus, according to the Glaser Foundation. The protective vaccine then would allow HIV-positive mothers to safely breast-feed for an extended period of time, providing infants in resource-poor settings with nutritional and basic health benefits. "We are profoundly grateful to the Gates Foundation for recognizing the special needs of children in the fight against AIDS," Barnes said, adding, "Children have been virtually absent from HIV vaccine research despite having the most to gain from such a discovery." According to Barnes, it is "absolutely vital that we start to include children in HIV vaccine research, or we may miss important discoveries that only pediatric research could reveal."

According to the Glaser Foundation, to date there have been two HIV vaccine trials aimed at preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission, either during childbirth or through breast-feeding (Glaser Foundation [release](#), 5/18). The Glaser Foundation has helped pay for 41 studies related to pediatric HIV/AIDS research since 1988. According to the *AP/Chronicle*, the Gates Foundation grant nearly equals all the funds the Glaser Foundation spent on HIV/AIDS vaccine research between 1988 and 2007 (*AP/Houston Chronicle*, 5/18).

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