

For immediate release:

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The Wistar Institute Launches HIV Cure and Viral Diseases Center

Center Headquartered at New Wistar Market Street Campus

PHILADELPHIA — (July 16, 2024) — The Wistar Institute — building on its history of leading advances in human health as the nation’s first nonprofit biomedical research institute — is creating a new **HIV Cure and Viral Diseases Center**, made possible by a \$24 million institutional investment from Wistar. The **HIV Cure and Viral Diseases Center** will advance Wistar’s dedication to cure research to meet the challenge of HIV. The goal is to move beyond current life-long treatments to eradicate the virus. The Center marshals outstanding scientific talent, research expertise, and community support to bring together the very best in foundational bench to bedside biomedical research to discover a cure for HIV and a host of viral threats.

HIV’s capacity to mutate and evade immune responses has been a challenge to scientists, and the same challenge exists for many other viruses. In pursuing a mission to find an HIV cure, key insights to overcoming other persistent viral infections will emerge, which could lead to further cures as investments in HIV research have advanced other areas of research such as the Hepatitis C cure strategy.

When announcing the Center to an audience at the Jonathan Lax Memorial Lecture, Wistar president and CEO, **Dario Altieri, M.D.**, spoke of the historic opportunity the **HIV Cure and Viral Diseases Center** presents for biomedical research:

“Wistar has always prioritized innovation and has provided leadership to advance solutions for the most pressing health priorities; this new Center, in combination with efforts already underway in our Vaccine & Immunotherapy Center, positions Wistar with a unique opportunity to accelerate innovative ideas for an HIV cure.”

An estimated 1.2 million Americans live with HIV, and without a cure, they must depend on life-long medications. Thanks to researchers at Wistar and across the nation and increased priority by funders to advance a cure, scientific efforts are moving ever closer to success; new technologies and strategies continue being refined and tested; and clinical trials move forward.

The **HIV Cure and Viral Diseases Center** will capitalize on this significant momentum for cure-directed research with a robust investment to not only discover cure strategies but prioritize those with potential for deployment. In addition to current principal investigators already working on viral cures at Wistar, four to six additional principal investigators will be recruited to the new Center. Combining



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expertise in virology & immunology and together with industry and community partners, the Center will follow three concurrent aims:

- integrate multi-pronged clinical, virus-fighting methods that mimic and enhance the natural strengths of the human immune system;
- advance successes in personalized medicine to create tailored cure strategies for individual patients and patient groups;
- expand collaborations and capacity building to ensure cure-directed efforts include researchers and persons living with HIV.

Wistar's **HIV Cure and Viral Diseases Center** is a historic, and timely undertaking also expanding Wistar beyond its signature campus at 3601 Spruce Street for the first time in its 130+year history. The Center will be headquartered at a new **Wistar Market Street** campus with more than 25,000 square feet dedicated to laboratory and office space.

Building upon the tremendous successes of Wistar's HIV Research Program to launch the Center, Wistar's [Luis Montaner, D.V.M., D.Phil.](#) — Herbert Kean, M.D., Family Professor and co-principal investigator of the BEAT-HIV Delaney Collaboratory — will lead the **HIV Cure and Viral Diseases Center** as founding director and newly appointed executive vice president of The Wistar Institute. As one of the Institute's longest-serving faculty members and an established leader in the field of HIV cure research, Dr. Montaner brings decades of expertise to his leadership of the Center.

"I am confident we will advance towards an HIV cure in my lifetime, and I am honored to have the privilege of leading this bold expansion of The Wistar Institute," said **Dr. Montaner**. "The **HIV Cure and Viral Diseases Center** builds on Wistar's history of strength in virology, our collaborative networks, and our partnerships with industry and communities of persons living with HIV. With the launch of this Center, Wistar makes a clear and bold statement that the time to get us to an HIV cure is now."

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The Wistar Institute is an international leader in biomedical research with special expertise in cancer research and vaccine development. Founded in 1892 as the first independent nonprofit biomedical research institute in the United States, Wistar has held the prestigious Cancer Center designation from the National Cancer Institute since 1972. The Institute works actively to ensure that research advances move from the laboratory to the clinic. wistar.org.

