

TAG UPDATE

DECEMBER 2020

Progress toward Ending HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and Tuberculosis, and now, COVID-19

From the steps of Gracie Mansion in New York to working in partnership around the world, TAG's work in 2020 to end HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, and tuberculosis, and now COVID-19 has been far-reaching. This sample of media coverage of our work shows the breadth and depth of TAG's expertise and impact. From tackling exploitative pricing, to confronting inadequate research funding, to demanding that justice and evidence drive public health responses, TAG has faced the challenges of this year with our characteristic energy, solidarity, and science-based approach.

THE 'LONDON PATIENT,' CURED OF H.I.V., REVEALS HIS IDENTITY

The New York Times | Apoorva Mandavilli | March 9, 2020
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/09/health/hiv-aids-london-patient-castillejo.html>

“ By confirming that a cure [for HIV] is possible, it galvanized researchers. ‘It’s really important that it wasn’t a one-off, it wasn’t a fluke,’ said Richard Jefferys, a director at Treatment Action Group, an advocacy organization. ‘That’s been an important step for the field. [...] It can be very important for people to have these kinds of beacons of hope [...] At the same time, that’s a lot of weight for someone to carry.’ ”

HEALTH ADVOCATES ARE FURIOUS OVER THE RESIGNATION OF NYC'S HEALTH COMMISSIONER

The Body | Tim Murphy | August 5, 2020
<https://www.thebody.com/article/health-advocates-furious-resignation-new-york-city-health-commissioner>

“ ‘It was the biggest surprise that was also the longest time in the making.’ That’s how Annette Gaudino, state and local policy director for the New York City-based health think tank Treatment Action Group (TAG), described the news on Aug. 4 that Oxiris Barbot, M.D., the city’s health commissioner since 2018, was resigning from her post.[...] Gaudino added that perhaps the time was coming for mass protest against what she called de Blasio’s sidelining of public health experts in the fight against COVID-19 [...] ‘The politicians are removing the public health leaders [...] and as advocates and community leaders, we really have to get together and come up with our demands.’ [...] But she wondered if de Blasio was past the point of no return, noting the recent exodus of his staff amid citywide criticism that the mayor has kowtowed to the New York Police Department in the face of mass protests calling for dramatic police defunding and reform. ‘As with Trump,’ Gaudino said, ‘it seems like he has a very close circle that’s getting smaller by the day, and those are the only people he listens to, evidence and context be damned.’ ”

LGBTQ PEOPLE NEED QUEER SPACES. THE CORONAVIRUS HAS LOCKED THEM OUT.

Vox | Katelyn Burns | May 26, 2020
<https://www.vox.com/identities/21266301/lgbtq-people-queer-spaces-coronavirus-pandemic>

“ New York City-based sexual health advocate Jeremiah Johnson, HIV project director at the Treatment Action Group, said it’s important that queer people not lose sight of their own sexual health needs [...] ‘In this crisis scenario, underrepresented and historically marginalized communities have even greater dangers of being pushed to the margins and not having their needs addressed,’ he told Vox [...] Johnson worries that once the Covid-19 pandemic is over and regular testing begins again, we could see a surge in the number of new [sexually transmitted infections]. ‘SARS-CoV-2 isn’t the only pathogen that we need to be mindful of right now,’ he said. ”

HOW ANTHONY FAUCI BECAME AMERICA'S DOCTOR

New Yorker | Michael Specter | April 10, 2020
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/04/20/how-anthony-fauci-became-americas-doctor>

“ [Mark] Harrington, a prominent AIDS researcher and activist, had no formal scientific training. But [Dr. Anthony] Fauci, like most of those who had seen him testify before Congress or speak to a crowd, was dazzled by his brilliance. [...] Harrington continued to make a profound impression on Fauci’s thinking. Harrington was passionately committed to loosening up the F.D.A.’s restrictive regime. ‘It was murder.’ [...] Harrington, who went on to win a MacArthur ‘genius’ grant for his work on the disease, established himself as the most knowledgeable student of the agency’s byzantine regulations. In meetings with Fauci and other officials, he urged them to move faster and with greater compassion for those who were suffering. Harrington and other activists reassured him that they were committed to strictly monitored drug trials that would provide enough data to know what worked and what did not. ”

PUBLIC FUNDING UNDERWROTE MUCH OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF J&J'S DRUG FOR TB, ANALYSIS FINDS

Pharmalot | Ed Silverman | September 23, 2020
<https://www.statnews.com/pharmalot/2020/09/23/tuberculosis-jnj-drug-prices/>

“ Amid ongoing debate over taxpayer dollars used to generate medicines, a new analysis contends that public investments contributed up to five times more than what Johnson & Johnson (JNJ) spent to develop Sirturo, its groundbreaking drug for tuberculosis. [...] Lindsay McKenna, the tuberculosis project director at Treatment Action Group, an advocacy organization that funded the study, said [...] ‘Our findings show that in TB, public investments extend well into later stages of research and development, and are not limited to clinical trials. The public plays a remarkable role in developing life-saving innovations, yet pharmaceutical companies unjustly remain the sole arbiters of determining what these innovations cost and subsequently who has access to them.’”

HEPATITIS C TREATMENT BARRIERS PERSIST THROUGH THE CURE ERA, ESPECIALLY IN U.S.

The Body Pro | Ginger Skinner | September 29, 2020
<https://www.thebodypro.com/article/hepatitis-c-treatment-barriers-prisons-drug-use>

“ The rise of direct-acting antiviral medications over the past decade have resulted in cure rates above 95 percent for people living with chronic hepatitis C virus. But for the most vulnerable populations disproportionately impacted by HCV in the U.S.—i.e., incarcerated people and people who inject drugs—treatment remains dangerously elusive. [...] ‘Access in prisons and jails boils down to whether HCV is prioritized, the allocation to prison health budgets, and how each state’s Department of Corrections negotiates drug prices for the cure,’ says Bryn Gay, Hepatitis C Virus Project Director at Treatment Action Group. ‘It’s appalling that only 5% of people in prisons have been treated since the HCV cure became available.’”

WILL THIS BE THE MOST-WATCHED FDA MEETING EVER?

Stat News | Nicholas Florko | October 20, 2020
<https://www.statnews.com/2020/10/20/will-this-be-the-most-watched-fda-meeting-ever/>

“ The FDA’s panel of outside vaccine experts will meet Thursday to discuss approval standards for an eventual Covid-19 vaccine [...]. A number of vaccine makers, doctors groups, and advocates are already flooding the FDA with other suggested topics to discuss. They include: [...] *Why hasn’t Emily Miller been fired?* This one isn’t your typical question for an expert panel, but that’s the question posed by the activist coalition Treatment Action Group. ‘The agency can restore public trust by improving transparency and communications, and by removing staff who’ve been involved in perpetrating political interference. Emily Miller, who was briefly and disastrously appointed FDA spokesperson and continues to post misinformation on COVID-19 therapeutics, should not be an agency employee,’ the group wrote.”

‘THE BIGGEST SHIFT IN TB CARE IN DECADES’: TUBERCULOSIS TREATMENT TIME REDUCED BY A THIRD

Spotlight | Amy Green for Spotlight | October 21, 2020
<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-10-21-the-biggest-shift-in-tb-care-in-decades-tuberculosis-treatment-time-reduced-by-a-third/>

“ A new four-month treatment course for drug-sensitive tuberculosis (the most common form of TB) is as safe and effective as the current six-month treatment course that has been in use since the 1980s, according to findings from an extensive study. [...] TB co-director at the New York-based advocacy organisation Treatment Action Group (TAG), Mike Frick, told Spotlight that these results mark ‘the biggest jump or shift in TB care in decades.’ ‘Mike Frick, told Spotlight that these results mark ‘the biggest jump or shift in TB care in decades. It kind of changes everything.’”



DONATE ONLINE:

<https://treatmentactiongroup.salsalabs.org/yearend2020>

TAG

Treatment Action Group