

Headline **Next thing in AIDS fight**
Date **01 Jun 2011**
MediaTitle **New Straits Times**
Section **World**
Journalist **N/A**
Frequency **Daily**
Circ / Read **136,530 / 330,000**

Language **English**
Page No **27**
Article Size **278 cm²**
Color **Full Color**
ADValue **8,223**
PRValue **24,669**



Next thing in AIDS fight

PARIS: After winning the Nobel for helping to discover HIV, Luc Montagnier and Francoise Barre-Sinoussi say they are targeting the “reservoirs” where the AIDS virus lurks after it has been rolled back by drugs.

Montagnier, 78, and Barre-Sinoussi, 63, shared in the 2008 Nobel Prize for Medicine for their work at the Pasteur Institute in isolating the human immunodeficiency virus.

The researchers talked about their early role in the AIDS combat and their future goals in separate interviews ahead of the 30th anniversary of when the disease first came to public light, on June 5, 1981.

In January 1983, tissue samples arrived at the Pasteur Institute from a patient with a disease that mysteriously wrecked the immune system.

“Two weeks, three weeks later, our culture dishes had the first signs of a virus that looked as if it was the culprit, although much further work of course was needed to show the link between the virus and the disease,” said Barre-Sinoussi.

Montagnier recalled “a sense of isolation” as the team battled to make this vital connection.

“The results we had were good but

they were not accepted by the scientific community for at least another year, until Robert Gallo confirmed our results in the United States.

“It was frustrating, we knew we were right, yet we were banging our heads against a brick wall, in France and abroad.”

Said Barre-Sinoussi: “We were in an emergency situation, although we didn’t have any concept of the scale and magnitude of the epidemic, which emerged later on.

“We were completely wrapped up in our work. I never had the time to have a ‘eureka’ moment.”

The advent in 1996 of combination drugs to repress HIV was a turning point in the AIDS pandemic, they said.

“It’s quite a rare success in the history of medicine, in the sense that labs usually work separately and in secret — and on this one they worked together,” said Montagnier.

Both referred to a promising new study which has found that when a patient starts taking the drugs early after infection, this almost eliminates the risk of handing on HIV to a non-infected partner. — AFP



Vicki DiMaggio Davidson, 64, of Bay Point, California, was diagnosed with HIV in the mid-1980s. Over the last several years, she has experienced a number of chronic health issues. — AFP picture