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New DVD From HHMI Details Fight Against HIV/AIDS

A new DVD from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) provides an in-depth look at the challenges facing physicians, scientists, and others on the front lines of the global AIDS epidemic.

The free DVD, *AIDS: Evolution of an Epidemic*, features talks by and interviews with HHMI investigator Bruce D. Walker, a leading AIDS researcher and clinician at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, and Bisola O. Ojikutu, an infectious disease specialist at Massachusetts General Hospital and director of the Office of International Programs in Harvard Medical School's Division of AIDS. Both doctors split their time between Boston and the KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa, which has among the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the world. Walker and Ojikutu delivered their lectures as part of HHMI's annual Holiday Lectures at HHMI headquarters in December 2007.

HHMI will release the DVD on March 27 at the annual conference of the National Science Teachers Association in Boston. The DVD is also available to the public at no charge and can be ordered through HHMI's online catalog, www.hhmi.org/catalog.

The DVD is produced in conjunction with HHMI's annual Holiday Lectures, a highly successful program that brings accomplished scientists to HHMI to speak with high school students about major topics related to science and medicine.

The two-DVD set features four lectures by Walker and Ojikutu that cover the genesis of the AIDS epidemic and the original identification of HIV as the virus that causes AIDS; the life cycle of HIV and its attack on the immune system; the immense impact of drugs on the AIDS epidemic and the problem of drug resistance; and HIV's rapid evolution and the problems of vaccine development. One of the highlights of the DVD is a video showing a real-time HIV test given live in front of 180 Washington, D.C.-area high school students who attended the lectures.

The DVD also features animations that illustrate key concepts, such as how HIV infects healthy immune system cells and how the antiviral drug AZT stops the infection from spreading. A series of interviews touches on different areas of HIV research, including a U.S. doctor who helped identify AIDS as a distinct disease and a researcher who helped trace the disease's origin to chimpanzees in central Africa. A panel discussion brings out the experiences of three people living with HIV.

Viewers can also see extensive video footage from the South African clinics where Walker and Ojikutu work, including interviews with HIV patients there and a feature about the grandmothers who often end up caring for dozens of AIDS orphans.

The lectures in *AIDS: Evolution of an Epidemic* are divided into dozens of chapters to make them easy to use in the classroom.

The next Holiday Lectures will feature Nobel laureate Eric Kandel and Thomas Jessell, both of whom are HHMI investigators at Columbia University. Kandel and Jessell will speak about the brain and central nervous system at HHMI on Dec., 4-5, 2008.