



HIV VACCINE
TRIALS NETWORK

Scott Hammer – physician, investigator, patient advocate - human being extraordinaire, our comrade and friend



Scott Hammer – physician, professor, educator, advisor, giant in the field of HIV therapy and prevention – passed away on November 17, 2021. Scott was a transcendent personality in both the HIV therapy and prevention fields, amplifying how his presence will be missed by everyone. He touched many throughout his career both personally and through his investigative work. When one thinks of a person who exemplifies both scientific intelligence and personal grace, Scott Hammer emerges at the top of this list. Scott was a classically trained physician graduating from Columbia in 1968 in Art History, medical school at College of Physicians & Surgeons in 1972, intern and resident at Columbia/NewYork-Presbyterian, and senior resident at Stanford. Scott did his ID fellowship with Marty Hirsch and joined the faculty at Harvard and New England Deaconess Hospital, where he worked for 16 years, devoting his expertise and considerable energies to the AIDS epidemic, which led him to become internationally renowned as a leader in HIV therapy. Scott led some of the most important combination therapy studies in all of HIV medicine, paving the way to make HIV a chronic, manageable disease. He chaired with David Katzenstein ACTG 175, the largest trial of dual antiviral therapy conducted in the 1990s, and then ACTG 320, which demonstrated the benefit of triple therapy and became known as HAART: the standard of care for HIV infected persons that still stands today. He showed that adding protease inhibitors could reduce viral loads in people refractory to prior ART (ACTG 398), and co-chaired the study (ACTG 364) that was instrumental in FDA approval for the NNRTI efavirenz. His remarkable leadership at the ACTG led to over 50 publications. In 1999, he went to Columbia as Division Chief and the Harold C. Neu Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology and built a thriving ID division until he retired as chief in 2019. His colleague and trainee Magda Sobieszczyk took over the world class division Scott built.

These timelines of positions marking Scott’s career don’t come close to reflecting his real professional personae. Scott’s fund of knowledge in the area of ART was “head of the class.” He was elected to serve on or chair nearly every US and WHO guideline committee. He chaired the Antiviral Products Advisory Committee of the FDA, NIAID’s AIDS Vaccine Research Working Group, and IAS ARV Guidelines Group; served on the editorial board of New England Journal of Medicine and IAS Governance Council; led the WHO Guidance Development Group for ARV guidelines and vice-chaired their Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee on AIDS. He was on the Program Committee for CROI and was the conference chair in 2015. In 2019, IAS-USA celebrated Scott with the Lifetime of Leadership Award.



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As a scientist, Scott had what we call vision. He immediately saw the bridge between treatment and prevention and joined the HVTN soon after its founding, quickly becoming a leader of our organization. He brought instant wisdom and stature. He gave incredible assistance and guidance to define our approach to communicating the Step Trial results and, most importantly, he agreed to lead HVTN 505, our first efficacy trial post-Step and Phambili. This trial was already under the spotlight and the data on PrEP efficacy in MSM came out mid-trial. Scott worked tirelessly in developing a PrEP access program for the HVTN, which is still in effect 14 years later. He was the perfect person at a critical time to lead us through the trial and his stewardship in 505 introduced Magda to the Network. It's ironic that in the week of his death, we find ourselves looking at the data from 505, for it reminds us of data we are seeing with Imbokodo – some immune functions associated with efficacy and some immune functions looking like enhancing effects. Observations that are leading to new insight in how to design better COVID-19 vaccines.

Scott brought wisdom, integrity, grit, and optimism to the HVTN all at the same time. He saw the good in nearly everything. Collaborations were opportunities for new roads and new insights. New people would enter the field and create a wealth of ideas and speed the overall effort. These principles became the backbone philosophy of the Network. Build the infrastructure and leverage it – vaccine, ART, antibodies – all had their place and his intellect led us in these paths. He had integrity, sincerity, and commitment. When he spoke, everyone listened. We always had *him* summarize; we knew it would be the consensus. He listened, he synthesized, he explained. His talent apparent, but to him so understated. When his illness precluded him from joining us in person, he kept calling to ask if he should relinquish his leadership positions and I kept insisting he must not. Fortunately, he agreed and continued to attend our Executive Committee meetings faithfully and fully. In fact, Scott became even more valuable because the calls were more individual, more one-on-one or three-on-one with Glenda, and his views on strategy became even more influential. His absence on our EMC calls will be felt.

Unfortunately, his abrupt death did not allow us to say the things we would have liked to have said to him.

In Glenda's words:

"Scott, we have said all these words, so worthy of you, so fitting, so true. From my side, when I was a young investigator, you gave me dignity and respect, you gave me a voice. As I grew in science, I always found your support, your encouragement. I will always miss that quirky smile of yours, your sharp wit, and your sense of humanity. Go well comrade, and thank you for all the lessons."

Scott Hammer's death is an acute pain that will linger; a pain that as a physician one understands but as a friend and colleague, jolting. One doesn't replace such a person, in action or in memory. One can only heal such a loss with time. Too many classic papers and too many remembrances to make this grieving short.

- Larry Corey & Glenda Gray, co-PIs of the HVTN with Scott Hammer