Project Title: **Evaluating HIV vaccine research knowledge and improving HIV vaccine research messaging from community engagement events in New York City**

Project Type: Short-term Project 8-10 weeks On-site

Proposed Project Dates: Flexible 8 -10 weeks On-site between April 2024 – September 2024

Project Site: New York Blood Center, New York

Project Overview:
The goal of Project ACHIEVE/New York Blood Center Clinical Research Site (CRS) based in New York City (NYC) is to work on novel ways to prevent HIV and other infectious diseases, including the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19. As part of the research site, you will have the opportunity to work with a diverse team of clinical investigators, epidemiologists, social scientists, community engagement and recruitment staff, and more and be immersed in innovative clinical, socio-behavioral, and epidemiologic research. ***As part of the goal to enrich your experience in all aspects of research, you will be asked to provide some weekend and evening availability during your on-site rotation to participate in community engagement and recruitment activities, with support from site staff.***

As a RAMP scholar you will have the opportunity to work with Hong Van Tieu, MD, MS, Lab Head and Member of the Laboratory of Infectious Disease Prevention/Project ACHIEVE at the New York Blood Center (NYBC), Jorge Soler, PhD, MPH, and the Project ACHIEVE and Columbia P&S CRS research team consisting of co-investigators, clinicians, counselors, recruiters, and community educators who are experienced in recruitment, community engagement, study implementation and conduct, and retention in research studies among general and at-risk populations.

While participating in this 8 to 10-week program, you will work with the team to conduct a two-phase research project to evaluate knowledge of HIV vaccine and biomedical prevention studies and to improve HIV vaccine research messaging among stakeholders participating in community engagement events (Vaccine-O-Licious, Vaccine-O-Licious Mini-Tour events).

The overarching approach to community engagement for the Columbia Collaborative HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials Unit, of which Project ACHIEVE is a part of, is to communicate cohesively to the communities that we serve. For over 19 years, Project ACHIEVE/NYBC CRS and Columbia P&S CRS have worked jointly and with the NYC HIV Prevention Research community advisory board (CAB) to develop and conduct Vaccine-O-Licious, which is an annual event to promote and educate our communities about HIV vaccine and monoclonal antibodies research and current biomedical prevention efforts. We have engaged over 300 people from diverse communities at each event, including the LGBTQ+ communities. At the event community nightlife performers, including drag queens, are united to educate about HIV vaccine and other research. The community nightlife spokespersons include the Queen Mum and Queen of Vaccine, Mx. Clini Trials and other artists are selected in drag queen show competitions at the event to serve as research advocate artists. These nightlife celebrities also host Vaccine-O-Licious: The Mini Tour at smaller events throughout the year in NYC venues selected to attract diverse community representation. In these Vaccine-O-Licious Mini Tour events, we reach out to the broader community to encourage conversations around HIV vaccines, sexual health, transgender issues, and current available prevention options such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), treatment as prevention (TasP), and condoms. We also integrate discussions with people with HIV to help destigmatize living with HIV.

The specific aims of the project are to:

1. Conduct in-depth qualitative interviews of community nightlife spokespersons of Vaccine-O-Licious as well as with CAB members involved in the event planning to evaluate knowledge of HIV vaccine studies, knowledge of current HIV biomedical prevention strategies, perceived barriers and facilitators to obtaining knowledge of and participation in HIV vaccine studies, perceptions about effects of Vaccine-O-Licious in disseminating knowledge about HIV vaccine research, and ways to engage people in their networks and broader populations in shaping HIV vaccine research messaging to enhance HIV vaccine study participation (N=10)
2. Evaluate reach and impact of the Vaccine-O-Licious and Vaccine-O-Licious Mini-Tour events by examining attendance and pre/post-event social media engagement, by conducting brief intercept interviews to assess participant experience during and at the conclusion of the event (N=60: 30 at the main Vaccine-O-Licious event and 15 each at the two Vaccine-O-Licious Mini-Tour events), and by evaluating participant pre-/post-event knowledge of HIV vaccine studies, knowledge of current HIV biomedical prevention strategies, perceived barriers and facilitators to obtaining knowledge of and participation in HIV vaccine studies, perceptions about the HIV vaccine research messaging of the event, and willingness to participate in HIV vaccine studies on online pre- and post-event surveys (N=250).

Project Summary:

The research project involves two phases:

1. Conduct in-depth qualitative interviews of community nightlife spokespersons of Vaccine-O-Licious as well as with CAB members involved in the event planning to evaluate knowledge of HIV vaccine studies, knowledge of current HIV biomedical prevention strategies, perceived barriers and facilitators to obtaining knowledge of and participation in HIV vaccine studies, perceptions about effects of Vaccine-O-Licious in disseminating knowledge about HIV vaccine research, and ways to engage people in their networks and broader populations in shaping HIV vaccine research messaging to enhance HIV vaccine study participation (N=10)

   We will work in collaboration with our community nightlife spokespersons at Vaccine-O-Licious, including the Queen Mum, Queen of Vaccine, and Mx. Clini Trials, as well as CAB members involved in the event planning. We will administer a brief online survey and conduct a qualitative in-depth interview, which will be transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription company. The transcripts will be coded and analyzed by the research team. Dedoose qualitative software will be used in the management and analysis of the qualitative data.

   Interview questions will include ways to engage people in their networks and broader populations in shaping HIV vaccine research messaging to enhance HIV vaccine study participation. Examples of questions are:
   What do you think is the main message and purpose of Vaccine-O-Licious and Vaccine Mini-Tours?
   Do you think the HIV vaccine research message is clear?
   Do you think the HIV vaccine research message is believable?
   Do you feel that the information presented is useful to attendees?
   What are some things you like about the way the information has been presented at past events?
   What are some of the things you do not like about the way the information has been presented?
   What parts of the HIV vaccine research message do you think is most compelling?

How can the HIV vaccine research message be better integrated with the entertainment aspects of the events?
What types of attendees do you think come to Vaccine-O-Licious and Vaccine Mini-Tours?
Should the types of attendees be broadened, and if so, how?
What changes, if any, would you suggest?

2. Evaluate reach and impact of the Vaccine-O-Licious and Vaccine-O-Licious Mini-Tour events by examining attendance and pre/post-event social media engagement, by conducting brief intercept interviews to assess participant experience during and at the conclusion of the event (N=60: 30 at the main Vaccine-O-Licious event and 15 each at the two Vaccine-O-Licious Mini-Tour events), and by evaluating participant pre-/post-event knowledge of HIV vaccine studies, knowledge of current HIV biomedical prevention strategies, perceived barriers and facilitators to obtaining knowledge of and participation in HIV vaccine studies, perceptions about the HIV vaccine research messaging of the event, and willingness to participate in HIV vaccine studies on online pre- and post-event surveys (N=250).

   We will prepare for and conduct Vaccine-O-Licious and two Vaccine-O-Licious Mini-Tour events. Feedback from the in-depth qualitative interviews from the community nightlife spokespersons will be used to improve/revise the HIV vaccine research education components of the events. We will advertise this event through online ads, social media, Project ACHIEVE and Columbia P&S CRS websites, flyers at community based organizations, and emails to past and current research participants for those who agreed to be contacted for future studies and events.

   We will measure reach by 1) examining RSVP responses to the event invitation, 2) conducting timed counts of people entering and exiting the event space, 3) conducting timed spot counts of the number of people in the event space, and 4) evaluating social media engagement metrics before, during, and after event. During the event we will encourage participants and provide incentives to follow our social media pages, like and share our content, and use our event hashtag in postings.

   We will measure impact by administering an online survey (approximately 15-20 minutes) prior to the event to registered attendees. Participants are first offered the chance to complete the survey immediately after registering, with a reminder sent later for those who did not complete it prior to the event. We will administer another online survey within 72 hours after the event, with reminders sent within 1-2 weeks of the event.

   The online survey will include basic sociodemographics (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, education level) and HIV status. We will measure any past and current HIV-related behaviors (pre-exposure prophylaxis use, HIV testing, participation in HIV vaccine or biomedical prevention trials), HIV research-related knowledge and motivations (vaccine studies, current biomedical prevention strategies, perceived barriers and facilitators to participation in HIV vaccine studies, willingness to participate in HIV vaccine studies), and HIV-related beliefs (stigma, social norms, and perceptions) . We anticipate a total of 250 participants across the three events will participate in the surveys (150 from the main Vaccine-O-Licious event and 50 at each of the two Vaccine-O-Licious Mini-Tour events, for a total of 250)

   During the event we will also conduct 30 and 15 brief intercept interviews at the main and the two mini events, respectively, for a total of 60 intercept interviews. The interviews occur between the half-way point of the event through the conclusion of the event. Using the

Measurement Model of Event Experience, the intercept interviews will assess the impact of the event on the participant across five key domains: education, entertainment, aesthetics, escapism, and festivity. Together, the on-line survey and intercept surveys will allow us to evaluate the impact of the event in terms of participant knowledge, attitude, and beliefs on key content areas and in terms of the participant experience overall. These results will help inform how we optimize delivery of our content in future events. The Event Experience data may also help us better leverage our relationships with owners of nightlife and entertainment venues by demonstrating the impact of our events on their clientele.

Participants who complete the online surveys (pre- and post-event surveys) or intercept surveys will receive $10 e-gift card for completion of the surveys.

The findings from this study will be used to inform the messaging of HIV vaccine research and improve community engagement and recruitment of participants into HIV vaccine trials. The insights from this study will help inform community engagement, recruitment, and enrollment of diverse populations into HIV vaccine trials. Importantly also, we hope this work will enhance our capacity to build sustainable partnerships with stakeholders which will enable us to conduct community based participatory research aimed at reducing inequity in HIV infection rates.

Regulatory requirements for the project and plans for completing them: IRB approval will be obtained from the New York Blood Center Institutional Review Board for expedited review. The RAMP Scholars will complete Human Subjects Protection (HSP) training before they are allowed to participate in the study. Electronic data will be stored on password protected computers at the NYBC; hard copies will be stored in locked filing cabinets accessible to members of the research team only.

Expected Deliverables:

- Present project design to the NYC Prevention Research CAB on the design for their input and feedback.
- Draft interview guide, draft survey instruments (see description above).
- Conduct interviews, analyze interview data, analyze reach and impact data (see description above).
- Develop draft educational module guide for CER events based on project findings
- Present project findings to the NYC Prevention Research CAB after completion of data analysis
- HVTN Full Group Meeting – presentation
- Create slides on project findings to share on social media and other media outlets.

Project Contact Person(s):

- Hong Van Tieu, MD, MS, htieu@nybc.org
- Jorge Soler, PhD, MPH jsoler@nybc.org
- John Bonelli, jbonelli@nybc.org
- Jorge Benitez, jb2226@columbia.edu