



# The History of HIV—1984

**January 1:** Researchers at the University of Miami and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [report the first case of acquired immune deficiency syndrome \(AIDS\) in the spouse of a man who had received Factor VIII concentrate to control his hemophilia.](#)<sup>1,2</sup> Because the wife became ill a year before the husband began showing symptoms, the case adds more evidence that AIDS can be transmitted heterosexually by an asymptomatic person.

**March 1:** Two years after the conclusion of the cluster study that convinced members of CDC’s KSOI Task Force that AIDS was sexually transmitted, [the study is finally published in the American Journal of Medicine.](#)<sup>3</sup> The study shows linkages to an “Index patient,” who is linked to many of the earliest cases of AIDS, and labeled “O.” Reporters mistakenly report the letter “O” (which stands for “Outside of California”) as a zero, and begin writing about “Patient Zero.” They incorrectly infer—and later imply (or state outright)—that Patient Zero brought the virus to the United States.<sup>4</sup>

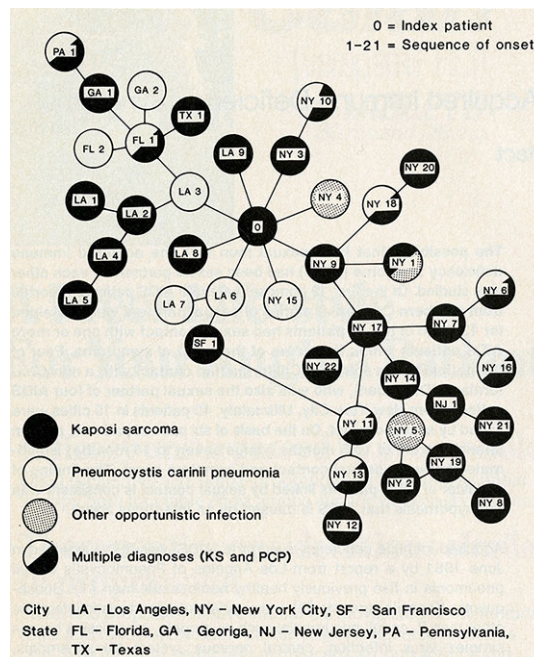


Image: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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**April 11:** Pennsylvania resident Lauren Burk gives birth to her second child, a son named Dwight. Her husband, Patrick, regularly takes Factor VIII for his hemophilia. Four months later, [Dwight becomes the first child of a person with hemophilia to be diagnosed with AIDS](#).<sup>5</sup> Patrick is subsequently also diagnosed with AIDS, and Lauren is diagnosed with AIDS-related complex.<sup>6</sup>

**April 23:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret Heckler [announces](#) that [Dr. Robert Gallo](#) and his colleagues at the National Cancer Institute have [found the cause of AIDS](#), a [retrovirus](#)<sup>7</sup> they have labeled HTLV-III.<sup>8</sup> Heckler also announces the development of a diagnostic blood test to identify HTLV-III and expresses confidence that a vaccine against AIDS will be produced within two years.

**July 13:** A *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control states that [avoiding injection drug use and reducing needle-sharing “should also be effective in preventing transmission of the virus.”](#)<sup>9</sup>

**August 15:** AIDS activist [Bobbi Campbell dies of AIDS-related illness](#) at age 32.<sup>10</sup>

**August 29:** The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) presents [AIDS: Profile of an Epidemic](#), the first TV documentary to examine the history of the disease and talk to experts trying to find a cure, as well as people living with AIDS and their families.<sup>11</sup>

**October 9:** The *New York Times* reports [new scientific evidence has raised the possibility that AIDS may be transmissible through saliva](#).<sup>12</sup> It will be another two years before proof emerges that this is not the case.



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**October 10:** San Francisco public health officials [order bathhouses closed](#) due to high-risk sexual activity occurring in these venues.<sup>13</sup>

**December 26:** The National Institutes of Health's Office of Protection for Research Risks (OPRR) [issues the first guidance for the protection of human subjects in AIDS research](#).<sup>14</sup> This guidance applies to all federally funded research and is intended to guide Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) at federal research facilities and universities in reviewing proposals for new research studies on AIDS.

**Specific Date Unknown:** The [Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund](#), under the directorship of noted civil rights attorney Abby Rubinfeld, publishes the *AIDS Legal Guide : A Professional Resource on AIDS-Related Legal Issues and Discrimination*. It is the first such guide in the world.<sup>15</sup>

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Factor VIII is an essential blood-clotting protein. Clots are lumps of blood that the body produces to prevent excessive bleeding by sealing leaks from blood vessels caused by wounds, cuts, scratches, or other conditions and preventing further blood loss. Factor VIII is the protein that is deficient or defective in patients with classical hemophilia. Signs or symptoms of hemophilia can include easy bruising, nosebleeds that won't stop, excessive bleeding after a mouth injury or dental procedure, bleeding gums, blood in the urine, or swollen or painful joints. Hemophilia can result in: 1) Bleeding within joints that can lead to chronic joint disease and pain; 2) Bleeding in the head and sometimes in the brain which can cause long term problems, such as seizures and paralysis; and/or 3) Death if the bleeding cannot be stopped or if it occurs in a vital organ such as the brain. See: The Nemours Foundation. (n.d.). *Blood Test: Factor VIII Activity (for Parents)* - *Nemours Kidshealth*. KidsHealth. Retrieved from <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/test-factor8.html>. See also: Centers for Disease



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Control and Prevention. (2020, July 17). *What is Hemophilia*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hemophilia/facts.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Pitchenik, A. E., Shafron, R. D., Glasser, R. M., and Spira, T. J. (1984, January 1).

The acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in the wife of a hemophiliac. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 100(1), pp. 62-65. <https://doi.org/10.7326/0003-4819-100-1-62>.

The couple, who were in their 70s, had been married for 50 years. The wife developed symptoms of AIDS in January 1982 but was not diagnosed until after her husband developed symptoms himself in January 1983 and died of *Pneumocystis pneumonia* in May of that year. He was diagnosed posthumously by autopsy.

<sup>3</sup> Auerbach, D. M., Darrow, W. W., Jaffe, H. W., and Curran, J. W. (1984, March 1).

Cluster of cases of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome: Patients linked by sexual contact. *Journal of American Medicine*, 76(3), pp. 487-492.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/0002-9343\(84\)90668-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0002-9343(84)90668-5)

<sup>4</sup> This inference/implication will do grave damage to the reputation of “Patient O,” who will be inaccurately identified as French Canadian flight attendant Gaetan Dugas in Randy Shilts’ 1987 book *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*. Dugas had had sex with a number of men who first presented with AIDS-related symptoms in California, but genetic tests published in 2016 will demonstrate conclusively that HIV had been circulating in the United States since at least 1970 and possibly earlier. See Worobey, M., Watts, T. D., McKay, R. A., Suchard, M. A., Granade, T., Teuwen, D. E., Koblin, B. A., Heneine, W., Lemey, P., and Jaffe, H. W. (2016, November 3). 1970s and ‘Patient O’ HIV-1 genomes illuminate early HIV/AIDS history in North America. *Nature*, 539(762), pp. 98-101.

doi:10.1038/nature19827

<sup>5</sup> United Press International. (1986, April 10). AIDS baby’s parents file \$44 million suit. Retrieved from <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1986/04/10/AIDS-babys-parents-file-44-million-suit/5792513493200/>

<sup>6</sup> Dwight will die of AIDS-related illness at the age of 20 months on December 13,



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1985. Patrick will die as well, on March 18, 1987, at the age of 29. See Dunn, M. (1987, October 18). Her Family Lost to AIDS, Survivor Begins to Cope. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-10-18-mn-15096-story.html> As of July 2021, Lauren Burk appears to be alive and still living in Pennsylvania.

<sup>7</sup> **Retrovirus:** A type of virus that uses Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) as its genetic material. (RNA is one of two types of genetic material found in all living cells and many viruses. The other, better-known type of genetic material is DNA.) After infecting a cell, a retrovirus uses an enzyme called reverse transcriptase to convert its RNA into DNA. The retrovirus then integrates its viral DNA into the DNA of the host cell, which allows the retrovirus to replicate. HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is a retrovirus. See Office of AIDS Research. (2021) *Clinical Info Glossary of HIV/AIDS-Related Terms* (9<sup>th</sup> edition). Washington, DC: National Institutes of Health, p. 153. Retrieved from: <https://clinicalinfo.hiv.gov/en/glossary/ribonucleic-acid-rna>

<sup>8</sup> Altman, Lawrence. “New U.S. Report Names Virus that May Cause AIDS.” *New York Times*, April 24, 1984. [www.nytimes.com/1984/04/24/science/new-us-report-names-virus-that-may-cause-aids.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1984/04/24/science/new-us-report-names-virus-that-may-cause-aids.html) Gallo was the first scientist to prove that cancer could be caused by a virus, and to discover the first known human retroviruses, human T-cell leukemia viruses I and II. He was convinced that AIDS was also caused by a retrovirus, which he designated HTLV-III. See Hardin, V., and Rodrigues, D. (1994, August 25). Interview with Dr. Robert Gallo. *In Their Own Words: NIH Researchers Recall the Early Days of AIDS*. National Institutes of Health. Retrieved from <https://history.nih.gov/display/history/Dr.+Robert+Gallo>.

<sup>9</sup> CDC. (1984, July 13). Antibodies to a Retrovirus Etiologically Associated with Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in Populations with Increased Incidences of the Syndrome. *MMWR Weekly*, 33(27);377-9.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, B. (1984, August 16). Bobbi Campbell’s Long Fight Ends. Bay Area Reporter. Retrieved from [http://obit.glbthistory.org/olo/imagedb/1984/08/16/19840816\\_Campbell\\_Bobbi/m19](http://obit.glbthistory.org/olo/imagedb/1984/08/16/19840816_Campbell_Bobbi/m19)

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[840816\\_0.jpg](#). See also: White, A. (1984, August 23). Candles and Tears on Castro: 1,000 Mourn Bobbi Campbell. *Bay Area Reporter*, 14(34), pp. 5-7. Retrieved from: [http://obit.glbthistory.org/olo/imagedb/1984/08/16/19840816\\_Campbell\\_Bobbi/m19840823\\_0.jpg](http://obit.glbthistory.org/olo/imagedb/1984/08/16/19840816_Campbell_Bobbi/m19840823_0.jpg)

At an August 22, 1984 candlelight vigil held to honor Campbell's memory, his best friend, Patrick Hagarty eulogizes him by saying: "He was a geographer and a geologist and a hiker and a mountain-climber; he spoke three languages; he was a poet, and a keeper of journals for 15 years. He was a knitter of beautiful sweaters. He was a very brassy gay liberationist and a lousy housekeeper. He was my best friend. Whatever Bobbi Campbell did, he did it all the way. That was his response to AIDS, telling us, 'Get off your butts and do something.'"

<sup>11</sup> The link goes to a rebroadcast of the program by an Australian television network. The PBS documentary begins at 0:51 of the video. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHssecOL\\_0c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHssecOL_0c)

<sup>12</sup> Altman, L. K. (1984, October 9). AIDS Studies Hint Saliva May Transmit Infection. *New York Times*, Section C, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> Associated Press. (1984, October 10). 14 San Francisco Sex Clubs Told to Close to Curb AIDS. *New York Times*, Section A, p. 18. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/10/us/14-san-francisco-sex-clubs-told-to-close-to-curb-aids.html>

<sup>14</sup> Office of Protection for Research Risks. (1984, December 26). AIDS Research, Guidance for IRBs. *OPRR Reports: Guidance for Institutional Review Boards for AIDS Studies*. Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/guidance/aids-research-guidance-for-irbs/index.html>

<sup>15</sup> Abby Rubinfeld noted that the legal guide was produced almost entirely by lesbian attorneys because the gay male attorneys at Lambda Legal were all sick or dying of AIDS. Personal conversation, June 29, 2019.