

Dr. Luc Montagnier, below, and the LAV virus, at right, discovered at the Pasteur Institute in Paris.

New U.S. Report Names Virus That May Cause AIDS

Virus could be the same as one found by French.

By LAWRENCE K. ALTMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 23 — Federal researchers announced today that they had found a virus that they believe is the cause of acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS.

They called it HTLV-3 and said they had developed a process to mass-produce it for the purpose of developing the tools needed to finally conquer the mysterious disease that has afflicted more than 4,000 Americans.

The announcement follows the attention recently given to the discovery of a virus called LAV by researchers at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. The head of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta said over the weekend that he believed the LAV virus was the cause of AIDS.

Margaret M. Heckler, Secretary of Health and Human Services, said today that she thought the two viruses "will prove to be the same."

With the new process, the Federal researchers said they had developed a test that could reliably detect the virus that causes AIDS in blood that is donated for a wide variety of uses, including the treatment hemophilia. They said they applied for a pat-

ent on the process today and that they expected the test to be widely available within six months.

The optimism surrounding the American and French research appears to reflect a high point in what has been one of the most challenging international scientific efforts to battle any modern disease.

Finding the cause of AIDS will not necessarily lead to any treatment of the disease soon, nor will it necessarily result in a method of prevention. But the finding led the American researchers to express the hope that a vaccine would be developed and ready for testing "in about two years."

Even as the French and American researchers' confidence has grown steadily in recent weeks, a degree of uncertainty still clings to the findings, and the tension of the exhaustive search was apparent in interviews and visits to the research facilities.

There was a sense of quiet triumph in the halls of the Atlanta centers last week, but the euphoria that might have been expected was tempered by the knowledge that months of research are still required to firmly ascertain whether LAV and HTLV-3 are the same, and whether either virus is the cause of AIDS.

Dr. Robert C. Gallo of the National Cancer Institute, who headed the team that is reporting its findings in four papers in the journal Science, said that if the two viruses "turn out to be the same I will say so."

Dr. Gallo said he had isolated the virus

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LAV Virus

HTLV-3

Dr. Robert C. Gallo of National Cancer Institute found the HTLV-3 virus.

Aids Cases In the U.S.

