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**Jon Cohen Interview
Kaiser Family Foundation
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JACKIE: Jon Cohen of *Science Magazine*, welcome back.
We are going to talk a lot about science today.

JON COHEN: Great.

JACKIE: You have been in on some conversations this week about where and why the first cell in the body is infected by HIV. What are you picking up that's new?

JON COHEN: Well there's been – people have known for a long time that HIV targets CD4 Cells, a type of white blood cell.

JACKIE: Yes.

JON COHEN: But, starting with the talk by Anthony Fauchi, from the U.S. National Institutes of Health, his lab has identified a specific type of CD4 Cell that's especially vulnerable to the first infection.

Well, then several other groups today talked about similar findings of that first cell and what it looks like. And they all found slightly different things. Some overlap, but the basic idea could really influence future development of vaccines and even cure stuff.

JACKIE: Because if they find that cell they know which one they need to protect?

JON COHEN: Exactly. If it's the first cell that gets infected, what if a vaccine could actually make an immune response that's targeted to protecting that cell? And the cure

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idea is simply what if you – if that cells particularly vulnerable, there's going to be more HIV in it, it could wipe out those cells? And let's say Antiretroviral drugs can't get those cells, but you get them out some other way. It's basic research, Jackie. This is not going to happen at the very, very beginning.

JACKIE: You also picked up something here about where things start, and it has to do with the origin of the parent of HIV, I'll call it. I thought we knew that.

JON COHEN: We knew that HIV came from a Chimpanzee virus, SIVCPZ, we knew the Chimp virus came from two monkey SIVs. The question was when did it happen?

JACKIE: Yes.

JON COHEN: And they use these molecular clocks to date things, and everybody fights over it. They're going to fight over this finding, too. But, the estimate was that the monkey viruses were 200 to 500 years old. Today, that changed.

JACKIE: Dramatically?

JON COHEN: 76,000 years old. So, trust me. There'll be fights, but –

JACKIE: So we're not rewriting the history books quiet yet?

JON COHEN: I wouldn't start rewriting them, but a solid researcher presented it, Preston Marx from Tulane and

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he's been right before about origin things, and he's been in it from the beginning. And I think it's going to turn some heads.

JACKIE: We have received questions from viewers during the week, and I want to give a couple of them to you now. The first has to do with Tuberculosis, the link of is obvious to HIV. Again, what is new that's being said here, at the conference?

JON COHEN: That's a great question. I mean Tuberculosis kills more HIV infected than any of the opportunistic infections. And today there was a study about when to start treatment with antiretroviral drugs, if you have TB.

JACKIE: Yes.

JON COHEN: It's always been confusing. Do you cure someone's TB first, and then treat them. And if you give Anti HIV drugs too soon, you can actually hurt people. There's a syndrome that can happen. But the study in Cambodia found that people who were treated two weeks after, they started their TB drugs, did better than people who started eight weeks after. And that should change clinical practice around the world. It was a large study, statically significant, a very important finding.

JACKIE: Another question has to do with the TI Vaccine Trial. What are the next steps, who will be involved, and what are the expectations?

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JON COHEN: Yes, it's been discussed here. The Ti Vaccine Trial was reported last fall, found a 31-percent efficacy. They didn't know why it worked, they couldn't figure out a mechanism, so now they're still trying to figure out, what was it that led to the protection they saw. So they're going to do a follow-up study, and vaccinate people again, who received the vaccine, and this time look at their mucosal surfaces, to see the immune responses there.

They're also hoping to do a follow-on study, with men who have sex with men, in Thailand. I don't think there's money for it; I think they're just designing it and hoping to find money; but, that was the news.

JACIKE: Okay. One last issue; you and I have spent some time this week, talking about the absence of government leaders from Eastern Europe and Vienna. That changed every so slightly today.

JON COHEN: It did. There was the First Lady from Georgia was here and signed what was called the Vienna Declaration, which basically says that harm reduction for drug users, should become the norm. And Georgia has a very small HIV epidemic, and it's embracing harm reduction strategies. So, that is a significant move.

JACKIE: Okay. Thank you so much Jon Cohen.

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