Universal Access and Human Rights was the theme for World AIDS Day 2009. Global leaders have pledged to work towards universal access to HIV and AIDS treatment, prevention and care. Yet, despite progress in preventing infections through behavioral and other interventions, the number of people living with HIV, continues to grow. Unfortunately, there is still no cure and only two of five individuals infected currently have access to antiretroviral drugs.

Universal access is still a challenge and antiretrovirals are not a cure. Expanded efforts to provide access to HIV treatment coupled with prioritization of research for an HIV vaccine, the only tool proven to stop the spread of disease, must happen if we are to defeat this epidemic.

To help increase awareness and support of HIV vaccine research, the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise, together with the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative and AVAC: Global Advocacy for Prevention, hosted a community event on 1 December 2009, World AIDS Day, featuring presentations and panel discussions by local experts in the New York City area.

The two-hour symposium featured presentations by Drs. Wayne Koff of IAVI and Magda Sobieszczyk of Columbia University on the state of the HIV prevention field with a focus on next steps in the journey to find an AIDS vaccine. Dianne Stewart of IAVI moderated a panel discussion featuring Emily Bass of AVAC, Jasmine Burnett of the AVAC-CHAMP Leadership Core, Pat Fast of IAVI, Richard Jeffreys of TAG, and Karen Sealey of PAHO/WHO. More than 50 individuals attended the symposium.

Speaker biographies and presentations are located here