

PROFESSOR FRANÇOISE BARRÉ-SINOUSSE

Doctor of Medical Science, *honoris causa*

In 1984, Margaret Heckler, US Health and Human Services Secretary, announced the discovery of HIV. For Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, that announcement changed her world. The previous year, she and her mentor, Professor Luc Montagnier, had discovered the retrovirus causing AIDS, at the Institut Pasteur in Paris, and their work was attracting a lot of attention.

Following the announcement, young men started turning up at the Pasteur, asking Françoise Barré-Sinoussi how she planned to cure them. According to Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, they were emaciated and desperate. 'They were in terrible shape. They should have been in hospital. They were very depressed, and some were suicidal.' Regularly, she offered to call for a medical doctor, but the men declined, knowing there was little help on offer. Looking back, Françoise Barré-Sinoussi reflects that she felt quite helpless, but recommended these lonely men seek support from others in the same situation. This advice proved profoundly effective for the thousands shunned by their communities around the world.

Since 1983, estimated deaths from AIDS-related illness number 35.4 million. In 2017, over 36 million people were living with HIV, 1.8 million new cases of HIV were reported and just under 1 million people died of AIDS-related illness. When the epidemic began, an HIV diagnosis was a death sentence, but thanks to researchers like Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, and others inspired by her, HIV is now a chronic condition for the 21.7 million people who receive anti-retroviral treatment.

Françoise Barré-Sinoussi was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2008 and since been widely recognised for her lifetime contributions to HIV and AIDS research. She has been a member of the National Academy of Science in France since 2009 and of the National Academy of Medicine in USA since 2018. She has also received more than 40 national or international award honors.

As Research Director at the National Institute for Health and Medical Research and Professor at the Institut Pasteur in France, until 2015, Françoise Barré-Sinoussi led research programs on HIV and AIDS pathogenesis. She has been a strong advocate for multidisciplinary and translational science, launching the 'Toward an HIV Cure' global initiative' In 2010, to accelerate scientific evidence-based public health interventions on HIV prevention, care and treatment.

She has a long-lasting experience of collaboration with resource limited settings through the Institut Pasteur International Network and the coordination of the French Agency for Research on AIDS and Viral Hepatitis research programs in Cambodia and Vietnam, demonstrating her commitment to building capacity, training and technology transfers in Africa and in South-East Asia. Today, she serves as Honorary President of the Institut Pasteur International Network and of the Virology Department of the Institut Pasteur in Paris.

Françoise Barré-Sinoussi was President of the International AIDS Society from 2012 to 2014 and, as International Co-Chair of the International AIDS meeting held in Melbourne in 2014, developed a strong affinity with the city, noting our inclusiveness, vibrancy and compassion. She remains involved with a number of international scientific advisory panels and boards, including the Scientific Advisory Board of the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity. In this role she has been instrumental in the establishment of key relationships which are the foundation of the Doherty's international health program.

Despite her success, she remains humble and always available to inspire the next generation of scientists, especially women. Working across barriers – scientific, gender, cultural, religious, political and international – has been and remains Françoise Barré-Sinoussi's driving force. She is renowned for her engagement with immunologists, cancer specialists, pharmaceutical companies, gerontologists and campaigners.

Françoise Barré-Sinoussi is recommended for the award of Doctor of Medical Science (*honoris causa*) for her lifetime leadership of virology research, her groundbreaking discovery of HIV, her tireless advocacy for HIV positive communities and as a champion of women in science.