

Downing of Malaysia Airlines: Effects on International HIV/AIDS Research

My name is Richard Brodsky. I am HIV+ since 1997, a brain cancer survivor since 2002 and a marathon runner for life. I'm doing very well on the AIDS medicine and recently my Foundation sponsored a 5K AIDS Cancer Run Walk. The Event was free for people living with HIV or cancer. We had several HIV+ people participating in the walk, but none could run the 5K. The attached article was written by a medical student volunteer. The only thing I can add to this, as a Jew is, we have done a great job of convincing the world that never again can 6,000,000 Jews or any other innocent group be murdered. The math is simple: Currently there are 1,600,000 people dying of AIDS every year. A four-year delay of the cure would mean that Putin and his Russian backed separatists now have more blood on their hands than Hitler. I ask you, was the CURE for AIDS on the plane that crashed? No one can say with 100% certainty whether it was or was not. Dr. Lange died on the flight and he convinced doctors to view AIDS, not as a medical disease, but rather as a medical pandemic. Researchers, please share your research! It's not about who discovers the CURE, but that the CURE is discovered! In my heart, I believe the CURE was very likely on the plane and if it was, are the Russian government and/or the Russian backed separatists responsible for delaying the CURE and killing millions of HIV/AIDS patients around the world?

-Richard Brodsky

The tragedy of the MH17 airline crash not only extends to the loss of 298 humans lives, but to individuals across the globe. Among the flight's manifest were about 100 contributors that were planning to attend the 20th International AIDS conference in Melbourne, Australia. It's incredibly devastating as there was a loss of knowledge and experiences that could impact the progression of research. Only a few names out of the estimated 100 contributors have been confirmed so far: Dr. Joel Lange [mentioned below], Glenn Thomas [World Health Organization media adviser], & Pim de Kuijer [32-year-old activist]. The annual conference is very different from traditional medical gatherings. There is a mixture of scientists, clinicians, human rights activists, patients & public health employees that come together in order to collaborate. These events have helped drive understanding and responses to HIV/AIDS in a short amount of time.

Dr. Joel Lange was a Dutch clinical researcher who focused on HIV therapy. He served as the former president of the International AIDS society. He was also the founding Chairman of PharmAccess Foundation, which advocates the improvement of access to HIV/AIDS therapy in developing countries. Dr. Lange played a very active & important role in HIV/AIDS research. In the mid-1990s, he advocated for the use of combination therapy in the management of HIV/AIDS. This was important as it reduces the development of drug resistance compared to monotherapy! He was an important advocate for providing affordable AIDS medications to African countries. "If we can get cold Coca-Cola and beer to every remote corner of Africa, it should not be impossible to do the same with drugs." His studies on the offspring of HIV-positive volunteer mothers in Rwanda & Uganda showed a decrease in congenital transmission [1% chance] with antiretroviral drug treatment. It is difficult to quantify Dr. Lange's contributions. Dr. Lange was a charismatic leader that promoted collaboration among doctors and researchers. Additionally, he helped promote the idea of HIV/AIDS being a medical pandemic and not a disease. It is not a question of who gets the glory for discovering the cure to HIV. The loss of Dr. Lange will have adverse consequences! According to the 2013 UN AIDS report, there were 1.6 million individuals who have died from AIDS. How many more will be affected?

Glenn Thomas was to be part of media launch on July 20th that involved the display of new tools to prevent harm to users of intravenous drugs. He was recognized as an effective communicator on the dependencies between HIV/AIDS & tuberculosis [note: susceptibility to tuberculosis rises dramatically in immunocompromised states].

This current crisis implicates the pro-Russian separatists as responsible for the shooting of this aircraft. More importantly, the likelihood of a direct-link to the Kremlin is being explored by the United States. Vladimir Putin has adamantly denied Russian involvement in this incident. But what other actions can we expect from a country backed in a corner? There are already effective US sanctions placed against Russia, and Europe should join in imposing their own sanctions on Russia. Regardless of the reaction, Putin's actions have not only affected the loved ones of these 294 individuals, but of the HIV/AIDS community and the international family. Will history prove Putin may have more blood on his hand than history's vicious leaders? President Obama condensed this notion at a White House news conference: "These were men and women who had dedicated their own lives to saving the lives of others, and they were taken from us in a senseless act of violence."

I make a plea to Putin to do some soul searching and end the crisis in Ukraine.

-By: Sahil Batta, Medical Student