



In Our View: AIDS Vaccine Trial Raises Serious Questions

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What Determines Success: Effect on Whites or Blacks?

Large Trial Finds AIDS Vaccine Fails to Stop Infection

Vaccine for AIDS appears to work

AIDS vaccine fails test, though effort is lauded

On February 24 the three headlines above appeared in the *New York Times*, *USA Today* and *Star-Ledger* (Newark, NJ) respectively. All three associated articles focused on the results of the first full scale human trial of the AIDS-VAX vaccine. Results from the trial indicate that though the vaccine failed to protect whites, it appears to be effective for Asians and Blacks.

So now what? Will development of the vaccine be discontinued or slowed because it is ineffective in treating whites? Will public support diminish because only minorities appear to benefit?

The headlines from the *New York Times* and the *Star-Ledger* seem to infer just that. Both papers used headlines that suggest that the vaccine trial was a failure primarily because it failed to treat whites effectively. The *USA Today* headline takes a more positive approach, citing the overall results of the test while pointing out the nuances of the trial results. All three papers took a more expansive approach in the body of the related articles.

However, it is the front page headlines, and the perspective of the papers regarding the success or failure of the vaccine trials, that are disturbing. To the casual reader two of these papers seem to be making pretty strong statements regarding the value they place on whites versus Blacks by their interpretation of the test results. How can three papers cover the same story and arrive at fundamentally different conclusions, at least in the manner in which they treated the story in their headlines?

This may sound like nitpicking but there are some pretty serious consequences for the Black community. In an era when fewer Americans are reading, and rely heavily upon television sound bites and ideologically driven talk radio for news and information,

