

Global Viral Forecasting Initiative (GVFI) Receives \$11m to Implement Pandemic Early Warning System

Google.org and The Skoll Foundation Partner with GVFI to Prevent the Next HIV

The Global Viral Forecasting Initiative (GVFI), a nonprofit research initiative dedicated to preventing pandemics, has received \$11 million dollars from Google.org and The Skoll Foundation. The support, which includes \$5.5 million dollars from each organization, represents the largest grant to date from Google.org.

GVFI, an organization whose mission it is to prevent future pandemics before they become fully established, brings together fieldwork in disease hotspots throughout the world with cutting edge laboratory science aimed at the discovery of new pathogens.

"Pandemics pose an enormous threat to us all," said Sally Osberg, President and CEO of the Skoll Foundation. "Often, by the time a new virus is discovered, it's too late to contain it. The innovative Global Viral Forecasting Initiative is aimed at finding dangerous viruses when it is still possible to limit their spread. The Skoll Foundation is proud to support this pioneering and important work."

Through collaborative studies in Cameroon, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lao PDR, Madagascar, and Malaysia, GVFI tracks emergent pandemics to their source, working to provide potentially vital months or years of advanced warning before the next HIV or SARS emerges on the global stage.

"The 1918 flu outbreak cost more lives than World War I. Most epidemiologists agree - and worry - that world is overdue for another dangerous flu pandemic," says Dr. Larry Brilliant, Executive Director of Google.org. "The cutting-edge work of Nathan Wolfe and his network of public health stars may be one of the world's best bets to prevent the next pandemic."

GVFI's strategy for preventing pandemics comes out of more than a decade of research by its founder and director, Dr. Nathan Wolfe, who holds the Lorry I. Lokey Visiting Professorship in Human Biology at Stanford University. Utilizing \$2.5m in seed funding from the prestigious [NIH Director's Pioneer Award](#) Dr. Wolfe and his team developed the global early warning system that will now be expanded with the Google.org and Skoll funding. The early warning system has already allowed the GVFI team and their collaborators to discover a range of novel viruses and has provided the first evidence that retroviruses continue to cross from animals to humans.

"Nothing is more important to me than stimulating and sustaining deep innovation, especially for early career investigators like Dr. Nathan Wolfe," said NIH Director Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D. "He is a highly creative researcher who is tackling important scientific challenges with inventive ideas, ideas that are now garnering support from other sectors."

"The partnership between GVFI, Google.org, and the Skoll Foundation gives us the opportunity to take techniques we've developed over the last ten years and implement them globally" says Dr. Nathan Wolfe, Director of GVFI. "With this support, GVFI along with our collaborators will work to change the way the world prepares for the next pandemic."

<http://www.gvfi.org>

Public Affairs media contacts for GVFI: Susan Campos at 310-279-2498 or scampos@gvfi.org.
Photographs of GVFI or Nathan Wolfe are available upon request.

Bio of GVFI Founder and Director, Dr. Nathan Wolfe

Dr. Nathan Wolfe is the founder and director of the Global Viral Forecasting Initiative (GVFI), and holds the Lorry I. Lokey Visiting Professorship in Human Biology at Stanford University. He received his bachelor's degree from Stanford in 1993 and his doctorate in Immunology & Infectious Diseases from Harvard in 1998. The recipient of a Fulbright fellowship in 1997, Dr. Wolfe was awarded the National Institutes of Health (NIH) International Research Scientist Development Award in 1999 and the prestigious NIH Director's Pioneer Award in 2005. Dr. Wolfe has published over 50 articles and chapters. Among his major findings include the discovery of the first evidence of natural transmission of retroviruses from nonhuman primates to humans. His work has been published in or covered by Nature, Science, The Lancet, PNAS, JAMA, The New York Times, The Economist, Wired, Discover, Scientific American, NPR, Popular Science, Seed, and Forbes. Dr. Wolfe's research has generated support of over \$20m in grants and contracts from Google.org, The Skoll Foundation, NIH, the National Science Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Geographic Society, Merck Research Laboratories and various branches of the US Department of Defense. He has extensive consulting experience and has served on a number of advisory and editorial boards, including, since 2004, the editorial board of EcoHealth. Dr. Wolfe has over eight years of full-time experience living and conducting biomedical research in Southeast Asia (Malaysia) and sub-Saharan Africa (Cameroon, Uganda). He currently has active research and public health projects in eleven countries throughout the world.