



HIVforum.info: HIV e AIDS INFO e aiuto sulla sieropositività: forum aperto a tutti dove si parla di HIV e AIDS, e si discute sui problemi della sieropositività, i farmaci e la ricerca scientifica.

February 8, 2012

Italian HIVers' call against denialist professor Marco Ruggiero's yoghurt

We are a group of citizens and patients, associated in the **HIVforum.info**, a forum for people infected by HIV and others concerned about HIV/AIDS, and we intend to bring to the media and international public opinion attention our uttermost concern for the inattentiveness of the **University of Florence** about the theories taught and the activities put in place by Marco Ruggiero, professor at the Department of Experimental Pathology and Oncology, regarding an issue of vital importance for us: that of HIV as the pathogenetic agent of AIDS.

Professor Ruggiero is internationally known as an advocate of the theory that denies that the Human Immunodeficiency Virus is the causative agent of the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.¹ He is also mentor of graduation dissertations on AIDS denialist theory²; and recently, with Peter Duesberg and many other notorious denialists, he published a denialist paper in the University of Florence journal "*Italian Journal of Anatomy and Embryology*".³ In this paper, reasoning in a way that is considered as incorrect from the epidemiological standpoint and is rejected by the most prestigious scientific journals⁴, Ruggiero once more denies the link *-from a long time definitively assessed, both in laboratory tests and in clinical practice-* between HIV infection and AIDS.

Furthermore, this baseless theory is taught in a **course at the University of Florence** - "*The revolution of immunotherapy: perspectives on cancer and AIDS cure*" - where, according to the program, will be taught "*the HIV role in AIDS pathogenesis; association but not causation*", and that clinical trials have led "*to the eradication ... of HIV infection*" - a very harmful falsification of reality.⁵

We ask: what devastating effects such a false teaching can have on future physicians and their patients?

Putting in exceptional danger both public health and the life of HIV positive people, professor Ruggiero asserts that antiretroviral drugs (to date the *only* drugs that have shown, on millions of patients, the ability to prevent disease's evolution to AIDS, so saving millions of lives) are the death for AIDS real cause.⁶

¹ See <http://www.rethinkingaids.com/Default.aspx?tabid=60>.

² See <http://www.marcoruggiero.org/pdf/HIV%20and%20AIDS%20Thesis.pdf> and <http://aras.ab.ca/articles/scientific/20101021-Thesis-ChiaraMatteuzzi.pdf>.

³ *AIDS since 1984: No evidence for a new, viral epidemic not even in Africa*, Vol. 116, n. 2: 73-92, 2011.

⁴ See for example "Nature": <http://www.nature.com/news/paper-refuting-hiv-aids-link-secures-publication-1.9737>.

⁵ <http://www.unifi.it/clsbio/upload/sub/Rivoluzione%20immunoterapia.doc>.

⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VCeQyaV3Bw>.



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Moreover, as a result of his activities on Gc-MAF protein, professor Ruggiero **contacts patients online⁷, and offers a yoghurt added up with Gc-MAF (denominated “MAF 3 14”)**. But the trials he uses to support this yoghurt appear to be limited in their sample size and anecdotic in their results⁸, while he presents this yoghurt as an *“immune system strengthener”*⁹, able to empower human organism to the point that it will eradicate the virus, without any pharmacological support.

It is well known that pro- and prebiotics can have beneficial effects on gut mucosa harmed by HIV. But Ruggiero’s studies could not discriminate *-in the only HIV positive patient in antiretroviral therapy who has taken the “yoghurt plus Gc-MAF”-* if the absolutely minimal improvement of the immune function (a gain of 32 CD4+ T lymphocytes after two months of “treatment”) was due to the Gc-MAF protein, to the simple yoghurt, or to a casual fluctuation. In any case, Ruggiero denies that this apparent effect was due to the antiretroviral drugs taken from the patient.

Craziness of this last initiative was remarked by professor Claudia Balotta, distinguished clinician in the Sacco Hospital, Milan, whose contribution to the fight against HIV is proven by decades of activity. In the last October newsletter of the Anlaids association¹⁰, professor Balotta raised the alarm, writing that *“GcMAF is a substance..., whose properties are only partly identified, [and] we have no proven evidence that it has a therapeutic effect either in the cure of cancer, or in the cure of HIV infection. It is correct, then, that scientists will evaluate this substance in controlled studies; but it is dangerous to encourage purchase and uncontrolled assumption”*. She also emphasized the risk that *“some patients could suspend antiretroviral therapy and buy at a very high price (100 €/dose) a compound whose activity has not been demonstrated, consisting of a yoghurt putatively containing GcMAF (defined [by Ruggiero] ‘probiotic preparation putatively containing GcMAF’)”*. From other sources it is possible to learn that this “treatment” could cost up to US\$ 5.000 (almost € 4.000) per patient.¹¹

We believe in the fundamental role of freedom of research and teaching, which is safeguarded by Italian Constitution, art. 33.

But we also believe that, in order not to discredit the value of academic freedom, it is imperative that scientific method will always be rigorously applied, and that it is mandatory to prevent damage to life and health of patients from whoever, misusing that freedom, spreads theories lacking any scientific evidence.

Our life shows the undeniable link between HIV infection and its progression to AIDS; our daily experience shows that antiretroviral drugs are the only means presently able to halt this progression and ensure survival and quality of life to patients: spreading false and misleading

⁷ See the American forum <http://forums.questioningaids.com/showthread.php?t=7588>; but see also two Italian forums: <http://www.lila.it/lilachat/forums/thread-view.asp?tid=99602&start=1>, and this page in particular: <http://www.lila.it/lilachat/forums/thread-view.asp?tid=99602&start=1051>; and <http://www.pensieropositivo.eu/forums/nuovo-farmaco-t3128.html>.

⁸ See the poster presented at the 65th Congress of SIAI (Italian Society of Anatomy and Histology): <http://hivskeptic.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/ruggieropresentazione-siai-2011.pdf>.

⁹ For example, see again the discussion in <http://forums.questioningaids.com/showthread.php?t=7588>.

¹⁰ www.anlaids.org/web/upload/image/immagini_interne/Newsletter/anlaids_bymail_ottobre_2011.pdf.

¹¹ <http://forums.phoenixrising.me/archive/index.php/t-13073.html?s=5750a52f48d8017af900b1671f859328>.



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beliefs on this matter is malign; and nefarious is taking advantage of the fear that some patients have of the side effects of drugs to promote them “therapies” lacking any proven efficacy. Therefore, we sent a letter to the Provost of the University of Florence, asking for an open dissociation of his Institution from this bad science and activities that we feel as deontologically criticizable.

The same call to protect patients from the theories and practices of professor Ruggiero we addressed to many academics of the same University, to the Italian infectious diseases experts, to the *Istituto Superiore di Sanità*, to the members of the Italian *Commissione Nazionale AIDS*, to the politicians of the *Hygiene and Health Commission* and the *Parliamentary Inquiry Commission on Efficacy and Effectiveness of National Sanitary Service* of the Italian Senate, and the *Culture, Science and Education Commission* of the House of Deputies, to the activist groups, to the media and to the leading web sites in Italy and abroad dedicated to the HIV infection.

Sure that you will agree with our concern , we ask you to give the widest possible circulation to our call, so that no other HIV positive patient will risk of falling victim to the false hopes promulgated by professor Ruggiero and decide to suspend antiretroviral therapies that *-alone-* keep us alive.

Thank you for your attention,

*the “HIVforum group”
www.HIVforum.info*