

HIV is a biggest challenge to scientific community: Dr Robert Gallo

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Singapore: As the Ebola numbers are still growing, many scientists had stated that the virus may follow lines of HIV and become endemic in Africa causing global concerns. However, eminent scientist, Dr Robert Gallo, who co-discovered the HIV virus, and the director of Institute of Human Virology, said that among major viral diseases, HIV posed the biggest challenge to the scientific community.

Speaking to BioSpectrum, at the Cancer Conclave held in Aster Medcity, Kochi, India, Dr Gallo mentioned, "Ebola is a transient phenomenon. Mortality rates with HIV is almost 98 percent and we still have no vaccine breakthroughs so far. The fate of a HIV patient is only death, while at least a few people may recover from Ebola."

Dr Gallo said that Ebola cases will reduce soon and it was mainly a concern of public health systems and effective quarantining, while HIV, though known for decades is still killing millions every year. At the conference, Dr Gallo explained about Global Virus Networks(GVN), an initiative under his directorship. He said, "Scientists across the world must utilize the GVN platform to address the threat of viruses and communicable diseases."

Dr Gallo also explained that the threat of emerging resistance and mutations in viruses was a major challenge to mankind. "The threat from re emerging viruses like polio and small pox that have approved vaccines is also huge, said Dr Gallo.

"The world needs eminent virologists who can understand and work on a vast range of viruses," he said, "The Global Virus

Network will help in bringing together the scientific community in order to address global concerns and establish effective collaborations to tackle these contagious bugs that threaten mankind," stressed the scientist.

He further mentioned that viral epidemics not only kill mankind but also cause major economic loss and a threat to food security. "Developing countries like India, who face a major consequence of these potential threats must lead the fight to contain viral outbreaks," said Dr Gallo.