

# Honoring Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Insights

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This year's Asian Pacific American Heritage Month spotlight is on David Da-i Ho, M.D. One of the pioneering researchers of HIV/AIDS detection and treatment, Dr. Ho has devoted much of his life to understanding disease and helping people. During an era when specialists and laypersons alike misunderstood the nature of HIV and how to combat it, Dr. Ho laid the foundation for recognizing and treating the virus and AIDS disease.

Born in Taiwan in 1952, Dr. Ho, his mother and his siblings immigrated to the United States in 1965 following the passage of an immigration law called the Hart-Celler Act, reuniting with their father. He grew up in Los Angeles, acquired a BA in biology at California Institute of Technology in 1974, and completed his medical degree at Harvard University in 1978.

Dr. Ho's research discovered that HIV takes time to wear down the immune system. As such, he developed a treatment strategy of drug cocktails that attacked the virus early on in the disease, eventually granting a new lease on life to millions. Magic Johnson is just one of millions who [credits](#) Dr. Ho with extending his lifespan through antiretroviral therapy.

In Dr. Ho's August 1995 editorial in The New England Journal of Medicine titled "Time to Hit HIV, Early and Hard," he wrote, "To stack the deck in favor of success, we should exert maximal antiviral pressure (using the optimal regimen) on the virus when it is most homogenous – during the initial phase of infection."

In May 1996, Time Magazine [declared](#) Dr. Ho "Man (now *Person*) of the Year" for his discoveries. In addition to his study of HIV/AIDS, his forty-plus years of research in viruses includes recent work in panels to combat COVID-19, especially in researching the potential of antiviral antibodies to lower mortality rates. For this work, he won the [2021 Asia Society Game Changer Award](#).

Dr. Ho serves as the Director of the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center, the Director of the Wu Family China Center, and the Clyde and Helen Wu Professor of Medicine at Columbia University. Among the various memberships Dr. Ho participates in, he is a member of the [Committee of 100](#), a Chinese American leadership organization which liaises with China on an exchange of important ideas.