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Conference uninvites doctor advocating malaria therapy for AIDS

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Anti-choking maneuver inventor Dr. Henry Heimlich was uninvited at the last minute from a Nashville AIDS conference at which he was scheduled to present new information on his controversial theory that injecting AIDS and HIV patients with malaria can lead to a cure.

PanAfrica Conference 2004 organizer Leonard Madu said he reluctantly asked Heimlich to withdraw from the conference because he didn't want Heimlich's presentation to eclipse other messages at the meeting, which is devoted to addressing the alarming spread of HIV and AIDS among Africans and African-Americans.

As of Thursday afternoon, Madu said, Heimlich was still scheduled to appear. But yesterday, after a story in *The Tennessean* publicized Heimlich's appearance, Madu said the 11 a.m. lecture was canceled.

A spokesman for Heimlich called the cancellation the latest consequence of a "very weird Internet smear campaign" intended to discredit the doctor's theories, which have resulted in negative press accounts over the past several years.

"It's tragic," said spokesman Bob Kraft. "He's 84 years old."

Heimlich's theory is that injecting AIDS and HIV patients with malaria, a potentially fatal disease, can boost the immune system. The theory has drawn criticism from some in the American medical establishment as "quack" medicine that could put people's lives at risk.

Heimlich staunchly defends his theory as worthy of further research. According to published reports in *The New York Times* and elsewhere, he has sponsored studies on live subjects in China; the practice is not approved in the United States.

But physicians such as Robert Baratz with the Boston University School of Medicine say that so-called "malariotherapy" is dangerous because it "can be fatal and it also redirects people with HIV from therapies that have been known to be effective." Baratz also heads the medical watchdog group National Council Against Health Fraud, based in Peabody, Mass.

The three-day conference ends today and has drawn several hundred to the Millennium Maxwell House Nashville.

Heimlich discussed malariotherapy at the annual conference in 2002, according to Madu. Then, Madu received 300 e-mails protesting his appearance. But because many of the messages were anonymous, he did not think it was fair to remove Heimlich at the time.

Heimlich was scheduled to appear again yesterday. Earlier this week, Heimlich said he would report new findings about malaria studies but would not say whether human subjects were involved. He also said he was not surprised about the opposition to malariotherapy in the medical establishment, which once also opposed the now-accepted Heimlich maneuver.

In Heimlich's place, a panel met to talk about the pharmaceutical industry.

Stephen Mosha, a pastor in the African nation of Tanzania, said that traditional medicine offered new hopes in the treatment of AIDS. As someone who has suffered from malaria, Mosha said afterwards he thought Heimlich's theories were counterintuitive, but would have been interested in hearing the doctor's findings.

A State Department official spoke about plans to distribute \$15 billion in U.S. funds to 100 countries to fight the spread of HIV and AIDS and to assist victims, including orphans. Dr. Joseph O'Neill — deputy coordinator of the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator — said that much of the international AIDS efforts sponsored by the United States would focus on 14 nations in Africa and the Caribbean that account for 20 million HIV-infected men, women and children.

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