

LERINS

# Portrait of a woman





## Françoise Barré-Sinoussi

### The First French Woman to Win the Nobel Prize in Medicine

**Awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 2008**, virologist Françoise Barré-Sinoussi co-discovered the AIDS virus in 1983. This researcher, who has headed the Sidaction association since the death of Pierre Bergé, has spent her entire career at the Pasteur Institute.

Long before her Nobel Prize in Medicine, Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, born in 1947, discovered nature. This encounter in childhood would play a decisive role in her future career in scientific research.

Earning her Doctorate of Science in 1974, she joined the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM) after a stint in the United States as a research fellow for the National Science Foundation, to study the relationships between retroviruses and cancers.

Stationed at the Pasteur Institute, where she would spend the remainder of her career, **she was invited by Professor Luc Montagnier to work in his team and, in 1983, along with Jean-Claude Chermann, performed the bulk of the work that led to the discovery of the human immunodeficiency virus, the causative agent of AIDS.**

She then became head of her own laboratory at the Pasteur Institute and initiated research programs on the viral and host determinants of HIV pathogenesis.

Between 1988 and 1998, she was also involved in research programs for an AIDS vaccine and then took over the direction, within the virology department of the Pasteur Institute, of the retroviral biology unit, now known as the unit for regulation of retroviral infections. Her team works notably on modes of AIDS virus transmission from mother to child, on innate mechanisms of infection regulation, and on infections caused in monkeys by simian viruses.

Her commitment to the fight against AIDS is not only scientific but also humanitarian. In addition to her laboratory work, she has multiplied research and training initiatives on the ground in Africa and Asia, not hesitating, when necessary, to alert governments and institutions in countries most affected by the epidemic.

A Director of Research of Exceptional Class at INSERM, President of the Scientific Council of the National Agency for Research on AIDS and Viral Hepatitis (ANRS), and Director of the ANRS research site in Asia, a member of the scientific vigilance committee of the Pasteur Institute, she is a member of the French National Academy of Sciences and has been elevated to the rank of Grand Cross of the French Legion of Honour.

**Françoise Barré-Sinoussi is the first French woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Medicine.**