Murdered by Medics

By the early 1950s, the word *polio* struck panic in the hearts of American parents. Each year more than 33,000 children were crippled or slowly killed by the disease. It first infected the lining of the intestines, then moved into the bloodstream, then on to the nervous system, finally attacking the brain stem. The extent to which it destroyed the brain stem determined whether a patient lived as a cripple or died. Survivors were often too weak to breathe on their own, so they were attached to large, ominous-looking machines called *iron lungs*, which filled hospital wards across the suffering nation. The scientific community was desperate to find a cure or vaccine, but polio was not a bacterial infection, so antibiotics were of no use. Polio was caused by a virus, and doctors didn't know how to stop it.

One President of the US, Franklin D Roosevelt, had been struck by polio. A friend of his, a New York City attorney, organized the March of Dimes, prompting millions of grade school kids to break open their piggy banks and donate their coins to help pay for polio research. Jonas Salk came up with a possible solution: grow polio viruses in the laboratory, then kill them, then inject them into children. There were three main strains of polio, and this vaccine would fight all of them. The hope was that the viruses would not be able to reproduce in the body because the viruses were dead, but they would stimulate the body's immune system to prepare to do battle against any future invasion of live polio viruses. Trials were undertaken to find out if it worked in practice, not just in theory. It seemed to work.

Salk designed the procedure for growing a huge supply of polio viruses. Five labs began manufacturing the vaccine, and by April, 1955, mass inoculations of school children were to begin. Scientists breathed a sigh of relief, and parents held their breath in anticipation. One more formality needed to be taken care of first, though, just to be extra cautious. Bernice Eddy, MD, PhD, bacteriologist, was assigned the task of performing the final safety test on the new vaccine. There was a problem. When she injected the vaccine into lab monkeys, they became paralyzed. The viruses were not dead! She sent pictures of her results to managers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and warned them that the vaccine wasn't quite ready for prime time yet.

The medical and scientific communities gave Bernice Eddy a pat on the back for a job well done, and parents across the nation expressed their gratitude. Sure, it was disappointing, but at least Dr Eddy had prevented their kids from being injected with live polio viruses, leaving them crippled or dead. Salk went back to the drawing board to figure out how his procedure needed to be improved to make sure the virusus were killed before being injected into children.

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Well, not really. That's what should have happened, but it didn't play out that way. Instead, scientists and managers at NIH talked it over, debating what to do. A few prominent doctors weighed in and said the mass inoculations should proceed as planned. One of them was Dr Alton Ochsner, who was so sure the vaccine was safe that he vaccinated his own grandchildren. His grandson died, and his granddaughter was struck with polio. They weren't the only victims. Oveta Hobby (Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare) and Dr William Sebrell (Director of NIH) both resigned in disgrace. A massive lawsuit was filed. Dr Eddy was shamefully transferred from polio research to the influenza section by her thankless NIH managers.

Bernice Eddy expressed her frustration to a group of brown-bagging fellow female scientists on the steps of the lab where they all worked. One of them was Sarah Stewart, who was waging her own battle against the medical bureaucracy. They became close friends. Sarah went on to prove that some cancers were caused by viruses, and in the process she contributed to the discovery of DNA recombination. Those were major medical and scientific accomplishments, but few people today have ever heard of Dr Sarah Stewart, MD, PhD. Meanwhile, Albert Sabin developed a safer polio vaccine using viruses that weren't dead, but were sufficiently weakened to make the vaccine safe and effective.

Well, not really. The Sabin vaccine did wipe out the polio epidemic, but it had problems as well, although nobody realized it at the time. They were eventually discovered by doctors Bernice Eddy and Sarah Stewart. But, as in the case of the Salk vaccine, enormous damage was done to untold millions of Americans who were injected with the improved (Sabin) polio vaccine. (You and I may be victims, whether or not we know it yet.)

Sarah had always believed that viruses caused cancer, and she wanted to prove it in the laboratory. But she was dismissed by scientists at NIH and National Cancer Institute (NCI). She eventually gained access to an NCI lab, and she came close to proving her theory, but she needed her friend Bernice Eddy to help her across the finish line. Bernice showed Sarah how to grow viruses in a culture of mouse cells, and that sparked a series of productive experiments. As Sarah approached the brink of a major breakthrough, she would happily show off her results to impressed NIH pathologists, but she refused to explain how she had arrived at the result. It drove Sarah's colleagues crazy.

Together, Sarah and Bernice discovered the polyoma virus. They were able to produce several kinds of cancer in mice and hamsters – proof that cancer was caused by viruses. Sarah's success opened the door to a whole new direction in cancer research, and it gave newfound hope for a cure. Researchers at Yale soon realized that Sarah's polyoma virus was very similar to the known Simian Virus #40 (SV-40), a kind of monkey virus. Medical scientists didn't know much about monkey viruses at that time, but they began to encounter more and more evidence that monkey viruses also caused cancer, and that began to worry Bernice Eddy. (a) Monkey viruses caused cancer. (b) The polio vaccine in use was produce from polio viruses cultivated in tissue from monkey kidneys. (c) Had cancer-causing monkey viruses inadvertently been introduced into polio vaccine? Had a whole generation of Americans been injected with cancer viruses? In June, 1959, Dr Eddy kept her suspicions to herself and set about trying to find out if that horrifying prospect was reality.

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In October, 1960, Dr Eddy spoke before the New York Cancer Society. She told the audience that she had examined the monkey kidney cells used for growing polio viruses, and she found that there were indeed cancer-causing viruses present. The stunned audience knew what they were hearing. The polio vaccine contained cancer-causing monkey viruses. That meant there would likely be an epidemic of cancer in the US. She hadn't cleared her astonishing remarks with her managers at NIH, and when they found out about it, they were livid. They would not tolerate any hint of contaminated polio vaccine at NIH, and they could not tolerate Dr Bernice Eddy. They destroyed her professionally. But they couldn't stop the truth from getting out.

Laurella McClelland worked for vaccine developer Maurice Hilleman in Philadelphia. She knew that the SV-40 virus did not cause cancer in Asian monkeys, where it was originally found. But what if it were introduced

into other monkeys that did not naturally have SV-40 in them? Finding out would be a challenge, because all the monkeys in American laboratories had been exposed to SV-40 and had been given the opportunity to develop an immunity to it. McClelland's research for Hilleman would require clean monkeys from the African wild, and they decided to eschew the usual animal-importing system to avoid cross-contamination on the way to Hilleman's labs. When clean African green monkeys arrived and were injected with SV-40, they did indeed develop cancer. Hilleman told a medical conference in Copenhagen about his findings. But many people in the audience already knew the polio vaccine contained cancer-causing viruses. That's because they worked for NIH, and it was no secret there. They just hadn't bothered to tell Americans about it!

But NIH couldn't keep the bad news bottled up much longer. Or could they? One of Bernice Eddy's coworkers published an article in 1961 stating that live SV-40 (cancer-causing monkey virus) was present in the polio vaccine. Eddy confirmed it, but she wasn't allowed to tell us about it for another year, even though it was her original research that brought the problem to light. NIH promised the Surgeon General that new batches of polio vaccine would be free of SV-40. According to a report on page 33 of the July 26, 1961 New York Times, two polio vaccine manufacturers were taking their vaccines out of circulation until the SV-40 virus could be eliminated, but there was no mention of the vaccine causing cancer. However, seven months later another NYT article did casually mention the possibility of cancer viruses in the polio vaccine. It was buried on page 27. The story then quickly faded into oblivion (to the extent that the public ever became aware of it in the first place).

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Was NIH justified in not coming clean about the cancer-causing polio virus? No doubt, there was grave concern that such news might destroy all faith in all vaccines, irreparably damage Americans' confidence in our doctors and scientists, and instantly destroy more careers. But is it their responsibility to protect the public from possible loss of faith? All one needs to do is recall how horribly NIH treated Dr Bernice Eddy. There is no excuse for that. It clearly demonstrates one undeniable truth, ugly as it is. When push comes to shove, the **scientists, researchers, doctors, and federal managers in charge will always protect their own careers and reputations first**. That is, to them, the highest priority. Protecting **your** safety and interests comes a distant second, or lower. There is no reason to think it is any different today. Today, people who resist vaccination of their children are dismissed, reviled, ridiculed, and vilified. So was Dr Bernice Eddy. Twice.

If you somehow still think NIH deserves a pass because they acted out of concern for the public welfare, recall how they injected millions of kids with the Salk polio vaccine, even though they knew without doubt that it was unsafe. There is no way to justify or condone that egregious breach of the public trust. That was murder. It was manslaughter. It was reckless endangerment of millions of children. There is simply no way to paint a happy face on that butt-ugly betrayal of the public trust. No excuses. No euphemisms. Call it what it is: premeditated murder, and Dr Alton Ochsner was one of the primary murderers.

How much damage was caused by the "safe" polio vaccine? Dr Bernice Eddy predicted an epidemic of cancer. Was she right? Yes. But only certain kinds of cancer increased significantly. There was no increase in leukemia or Hodgkin's disease. There was no increase in cancer of the: brain, colon, bladder, rectum, larynx, pancreas, kidney, stomach,

ovary, testes, cervix, uterus, thyroid, esophagus, or liver. Lung cancer exploded, but that has a strong correlation to smoking, so we can't blame that on polio vaccine, at least entirely. Between 1973 and 1988, lymphoma increased by more than 60%, prostate cancer by close to 60%, and breast cancer by 35-40%. Melanoma of skin increased by 90% in 1986 and 1987 before dropping back to 70% in 1988. (Those numbers represent a percent increase in the incidence ratio per 100,000 compared to 1973.)

A ten-year-old girl inoculated in 1955 turned 40 in 1985. Age 40 is when the incidence of breast cancer begins to increase significantly. The timing fits. SV-40 infection is now widespread within the human population almost certainly as a result of the polio vaccine. (According to John Martin, MD, PhD, virologist who formerly worked for FDA.) In the 1950s, SV-40 was one of several dozen viruses that contaminated the original Salk and Sabin polio vaccines administered to millions of school children in the United States and Europe. (From the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.)

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Meanwhile, back in the early 1960s, doctors and scientists scrambled to find an effective cancer vaccine. They knew their chances of success were very slim, at least in time to stop the coming cancer epidemic. But they had to try. And they had to do their work very quietly and privately so word didn't get around about the huge dark cloud over the American horizon. It was their responsibility to protect the American people from the truth. They were the only people smart enough to be entrusted with the truth. Those same smart people who were responsible for injecting millions of unsuspecting Americans with polio and cancer. What could go wrong?

They would need a very special person in charge of the project. They would have to be competent in science and medicine. They would have to be courageous and resourceful. They would need to be devoted, dedicated, driven. And they would need to be protected in case it didn't turn out well. The people involved would be national heroes if they could manage to pull it off. On the other hand, they would just slither away quickly and quietly if they failed.

The leader of the clandestine project was Dr Alton Ochsner. You remember him. He's the MD who murdered and crippled his grandchildren with a polio vaccine he knew was not safe, and supported the use of the same contaminated vaccine on millions of other school kids. That Alton Ochsner. With him at the helm, this was off to a good start.

Sarah Stewart was an obvious candidate. She had started medical school at University of Chicago in 1936, together with Mary Sherman, who got her MD in 1941 and practiced orthopedic surgery in Chicago until 1952. That's when Dr Sherman moved to New Orleans, and that's where her life became involved in a situation that ended up killing her. During the summer of 1963, Mary knew and worked with David Ferrie, Lee Harvey Oswald, Judyth Vary Baker, and Dr Ochsner. Only something as important and urgent as developing a vaccine against cancer could bring together two people as different as Sherman and Ferrie. Mary, Ferrie, Vary, and Lee formed a motley crew which was just part of a larger group of doctors and scientists working together in New Orleans to stop the pending cancer epidemic.

But, somewhere along the line, the mission of this small group took a sharp turn. No doubt Dr Ochsner was at least partly responsible for the shift in focus, but the decision also involved certain CIA operatives, a few FBI special agents, key mafia figures, and Cuban refugee leaders in the anti-Castro movement. Someone

realized that developing a cancer vaccine involved producing increasingly powerful cancer-causing viruses. The hope was that those viruses would hold the key to dealing effectively with cancer in humans. But, what if those same potent viruses were diverted for use in a plot to kill Castro? As long as scientists were working on it anyway, why not make the most of this golden opportunity to inject Castro with cancer viruses and watch him die within days or weeks, apparently of natural causes. There would be no trace of American involvement at all. The perfect crime.

The group in New Orleans in the summer of 1963 became aware of a plot to kill John F Kennedy as well as Castro. Their project was no longer just about finding a cure for cancer; now it was about developing a cancer supervirus, a bioweapon to be use to murder Castro. They believed that if they could kill Castro in time, that would effectively end the plot to kill JFK. While they had not signed on for anything of that kind, and while they found the idea appalling, and not something they would ever consider being a part of, they became a part of it. Why? The nefarious intent of some very bad people didn’t change the fact that they had to find a cure for cancer. To be able to continue that work, the project became about killing Castro as the only possible way to save the life of JFK. (It would not have prevented the JFK murder, but these people did not know that.)