

[PDF] Polio: An American Story

David M. Oshinsky - pdf download free book

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Author: David M. Oshinsky

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly The key protagonists in historian Oshinsky's (Univ. of Texas, Austin) account of the bruising scientific race to create a vaccine are Jonas Salk, a proponent of a "killed-virus" vaccine, and Albert Sabin, who championed the "live-virus" vaccine. As revered as these men are in popular culture, Oshinsky records their contemporaries' less complimentary opinions (even Sabin's friends, for instance, describe him as "arrogant, egotistical and occasionally cruel"). Oshinsky (*A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy*, etc.) looks at social context, too, such as the impact of the March of Dimes campaign on public consciousness—and fear—of polio. Tying in the role polio victim FDR played in making the effort a national priority, the precursory scientific developments that aided Salk and Sabin's work, and the ethical dilemmas surrounding human testing, Oshinsky sometimes bogs down in details. But all in all, this is an edifying description of one of the most significant public health successes in U.S. history. 46 b&w photos not seen by *PW*. (Apr.)

From School Library Journal Adult/High School--This well-grounded account documents the quest for a polio vaccine. It reveals professional rivalries and clinical breakthroughs, describes a new era in approaches to public philanthropy, and re-creates the tenor of American culture during the 1940s and '50s, when every city, suburb, and rural community faced potential tragedy from annual outbreaks of the disease. The decades-long contentious relationship between doctors Albert Sabin and Jonas Salk provides the centerpiece of this story. Virologists were split into two main camps: those pursuing the development of an attenuated live-virus vaccine versus those focusing on a killed-virus vaccine, with adherents of the latter believing it would prove not only safer and more effective, but also quicker and cheaper to mass produce. Historical context is provided by detailing how Franklin D. Roosevelt raised public awareness, how his influence led to the emergence of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis and the March of Dimes, and the subsequent creation of the poster child concept as a way of creating grassroots fundraising. The writing dramatically captures both tensions and ethical dimensions inherent in moving from laboratory work with monkeys to human experimentation and, eventually, to implementation of a massive inoculation program reaching 1.3 million schoolchildren in the 1954 Salk vaccine trials. While this part of the story and the public adulation of Salk have been told elsewhere, Oshinsky amplifies the tale with data explaining why the Sabin oral vaccine became the one preeminently adopted internationally, and why the debate has continued. Sixteen pages of arresting black-and-white photographs are included.--*Lynn Nutwell, Fairfax City Regional Library, VA*

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