

DOES VACCINATION PROTECT FROM SMALLPOX?

FOR HOW LONG?

Edward Jenner, when he stated his case for vaccination, in his *Inquiry* (1798) claimed that vaccinated persons "were for ever after secure from the infection of smallpox." In 1800, in his third publication, he affirmed that "the human frame, when once it has felt the influence of the genuine cowpox, in the way that has been described is never afterwards at any period of existence assailable by the smallpox." In the same year, Mr. John Ring (surgeon) obtained the signatures of thirty-three of the most eminent physicians and forty distinguished surgeons, of London, to a declaration that "those persons who have had the cowpox are perfectly secure from the future infection of the smallpox." ("Life of Jenner," Baron, Vol. I, p. 354). Jenner's biographer (Dr. Baron) averred (1838) that had the assertion (which began to be made in 1804) "that the cowpox afforded only a temporary security been correct," it would have deprived the discovery "of more than half its virtues." ("Life of Jenner," Vol. II, p. 197).

Although in England as late as 1869 advocates of vaccination refused to restrict the protective power of vaccination to any period of years, in the thirties of last century re-vaccination had become common on the Continent, and had been made compulsory in five of the Armies of what was afterwards the German Reich, and also in the Danish Army, on dates between 1833 and 1843.

However, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in its eleventh edition (1910) stated that it is desirable that vaccination should be repeated at the age of from 7 to 10 years, and thereafter, if it be possible, at intervals during later life.

The Health Committee of the League of Nations in a Report (R.E. 132) dated 15th November, 1929, said:

"Most laws providing for compulsory re-vaccination fix the interval between the two successive vaccinations at **ten years**. Recent investigations indicate that this period may be much too long, and that in actual fact, smallpox immunity may not last more than **four or five years**."

The English Ministry of Health in its Memorandum on Vaccination against Smallpox, issued in September, **1947**, recommended that the Armed Forces on overseas service should be re-vaccinated every **two years** and the **yearly** re-vaccination of doctors, nurses, sanitary inspectors, and others likely to have to deal with cases of smallpox.

For international vaccination travel certificates the duration of immunity had been taken as **three years**, but on May 4, **1949**, *The Medical Press*, advocating the compulsory vaccination of all travellers, said "for real security in persons who have run the risk of actual contact . . . **six months** would be a more reliable limit to set for the purpose of international quarantine."

Two years before this suggestion of a six months' limit to the protective power of vaccination, the Assistant Medical Officer to the Staffordshire County Council, in his report in the *British Medical Journal*, January 24, **1948**, had stated that during the Bilston outbreak of smallpox in 1947, "all staff in any way connected with the cases were re-vaccinated at **six-weekly** intervals." So Dr. C. Simpson Smith reduced the limit of protection from vaccination to **six weeks**.

However, the Army authorities in Egypt had gone one better. During a smallpox outbreak amongst military personnel in Egypt (referred to in the *Lancet*, Nov. 25, 1944), an order went out from the commanding officer that all soldiers who could not show evidence of having been vaccinated during the previous **two weeks** were to be vaccinated immediately. The protective period of vaccination had been reduced to **two weeks**.

In smallpox hospital records cases of smallpox have been entered as having occurred as recently as **19 days** after successful vaccination. During the Glasgow smallpox outbreak of 1942 the Medical Officer of Health was surprised to find smallpox developing in persons who had been successfully re-vaccinated **17 days** previously.

In an article in *The Lancet*, November 25, 1944, Dr. Stevenson, Head of the Government Vaccine Lymph Institution, obviously desiring to exonerate the lymph issued from his Institution from any blame for the occurrence of smallpox in recently vaccinated persons (as for example allegations of impotency of the lymph), recounted many instances recorded in official reports or medical magazines of smallpox occurring and even proving fatal in persons successfully vaccinated less than three years before the attack of smallpox. Some of these occurred only **47 days** after vaccination.

THE ARCHIVE COLLECTION

THIS LITERATURE WAS COLLECTED
FROM VARIOUS SOURCES
OVER THE YEARS OF MY RESEARCH
ON VACCINATION
WHICH STARTED IN SEPTEMBER 1991.

FORTUNATELY I RECEIVED
SEVERAL DOCUMENTS
AND BOOKS FROM INDIVIDUALS
WHO HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN
THE ANTI-VACCINATION LEAGUE OF GREAT BRITAIN
DURING THEIR LIFE TIME.

THE LATE DR GORDON LATTO, WHO SERVED AS THE MEDICAL
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE LEAGUE DURING THE MID 1900s.
ALSO, IAN & MONIQUE STIRLING TO NAME A FEW.

ALSO THANKS TO JOHN WANTLING, AN INDEPENDENT
RESEARCHER, FOR PATIENTLY PHOTOCOPYING
NUMEROUS ARCHIVE PUBLICATIONS & FORWARDING
COPIES TO ME BACK IN THE MID-NINETIES.

I HAVE SCANNED THESE PUBLICATIONS & LITERATURE
TO PRESERVE THE WEALTH OF INFORMATION
CONTAINED WITHIN THESE DOCUMENTS
IN THE HOPE THAT THEY WILL BE CIRCULATED
& MADE AVAILABLE TO ANYONE WHO WISHES
TO STUDY THE HISTORICAL DATA
SURROUNDING THIS SUBJECT.

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