**THE SUCCESSFUL STORY OF ERADICATION OF POLIO IN INDIA**

**Write up**

**By**

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***This is a success story that needs to be told, because it is not every day that the Government of India is lauded for its efforts, most times it is vilified by both the print and the electronic media and from all its citizenry.***

***On 27 March 2014, the*** [***World Health Organization***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Health_Organization) ***(WHO) declared India a polio free country with no case of disease being reported in the last three years***.

*This is a remarkable achievement by the Government of India and they need to congratulated for their efforts and lauded for totally eradicating polio in the country*, especially because of the sheer numbers involved, given that children below the age of five years in India, comprise about one-quarter of our population, or approximately 300 million children.

We have all seen the devastating effects of polio, especially amongst children the world over and in India too. The scientist to thank for discovering the Polio Vaccine is ***Jonas Salk,*** who announced in 1955, that he had discovered a vaccine to combat **poliomyelitis**, commonly known as **polio**, this has turned out to be an important milestone for humanity.

Poliomyelitis, often called polio or infantile paralysis, is an acute viral infectious disease spread from person to person, primarily via the fecal-oral route. There is no cure for polio. The focus of modern treatment has been on providing relief of symptoms, speeding recovery and preventing complications.

**India’s Polio Immunization Program:**

In 1978, the Government of India began a vaccination program to eradicate poliomyelitis (polio), in the country, by vaccinating all children under the age of five years against the polio virus, by 1984, it was successful in covering around 40% of all infants in the country.

In 1985, the Universal Immunization Program (UIP) was launched by the Government to cover all the Districts in the country. This program led to a very significant increase in coverage from 40% up to 95%. The number of reported cases of polio also declined from 28,757 during 1987 to 3,265 in 1995. A significant drop, given the fact that, the Government was dealing with large numbers of children below the age of five years in the country.

With a goal of achieving 100% eradication of polio, amongst children in the country the Government of India launched the now popular “Pulse Polio Program” in 1995, for which they roped in Amitabh Bachchan and other celebrities to popularize the program. The Government ran advertisements in the print media across the nation and on Radio and Television. The last reported cases of polio in India were in West Bengal and Gujarat on 13 January 2011.

**Success at last**: ***On 27 March 2014, the*** [***World Health Organization***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Health_Organization) ***(WHO) declared India a polio free country,*** *a stupendous success story for India.*

Every year, India observes the National Immunization Day in January to mark the launch of the Pulse Polio Programme, which began in 1995.

This year in January 2015, 174 million children, below the age of five across the country were administered polio drops.

**Jonas Salk and the Polio Vaccine:**

**2015: An astounding alignment of Coincidences:**

1. **60th Anniversary of the discovery of the Polio Vaccine: April 12th 1955.**
2. **Birth Centenary Year of Jonas Salk, born October 28, 1914.**
3. **10th Death Anniversary of Jonas Salk, died 23rd June 1995.**

This day, 60 years and four days ago, (April 12th 1955), Dr. Jonas Salk announced that he had discovered a vaccine to combat **poliomyelitis**, commonly known as **polio**, this has turned out to be an important milestone for humanity. It is reported that “This announcement meant that a vaccine would be able to interrupt the person to person transmission of the virus, which was considered at the time to be the worst disease in the postwar era. Salk’s discovery was revolutionary and has helped to eradicate polio from most countries in the world, reducing worldwide incidence from an estimated 350,000 cases in 1988 to 1,652 in 2007”.

In 1948 Jonas Salk began his research on the polio vaccine, at the [University Of Pittsburgh School of Medicine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Pittsburgh_School_of_Medicine) USA. It is reported that “He discovered that there were three strains of the polio virus, he had an experimental trivalent solution by 1952. During the first safety trials from May 1953 through March 1954, Salk administered the vaccine to more than 5,300 individuals, including himself, his wife and his three sons. No one experienced bad side effects, and blood tests revealed antibodies against the disease”.

With funding from the “March of Dimes” Foundation and from thousands of individual donations from across America, Salk, undertook on of the biggest field trials in history. In 1953-54, more than 1.8 million school children in America, later to be known as “POLIO PIONEERS”, spread across 44 States across America were administered the Salk polio vaccine.

On April 12, 1955, the data was collated and results showed that the trials were successful. The American Government announced that they were granting a license for the manufacture of the vaccine.

**A tribute from Dr. Peter L Salk, eldest Son of Dr. Jonas Salk:**

“These vaccines have brought this terrible epidemic disease under control that once killed or paralyzed thousands in this country each year. They had a tremendous impact on the nation, and with their use, the world is now on the brink of eradicating the polio virus completely,” says Peter L. Salk, MD, President of the Jonas Salk Legacy Foundation, a physician, medical researcher and the eldest son of Dr. Jonas Salk. He was speaking at the “March of Dimes celebrates Salk Vaccine 60th Anniversary” function in New York on the 12th of April 2015.

He further added, “It is fitting to remember, during this 100th anniversary year of my father’s birth and the 60th anniversary since the discovery of the Polio Vaccine that we can come together in the same way to solve other significant problems affecting the health of humanity.”

Jonas Salk, never took a Patent for his discovery.

When asked, “Who owns the patent on this vaccine?” Jonas Salk is said to have answered: “Well, the people, I would say. There is no patent. Can you patent the Sun”.

<http://www.thebetterindia.com/9817/india-last-polio-ward/>

<http://www.thebetterindia.com/12669/india-achievements-decade-2005-2014-polio-mangalyaan-rti-rte-olympics/>

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