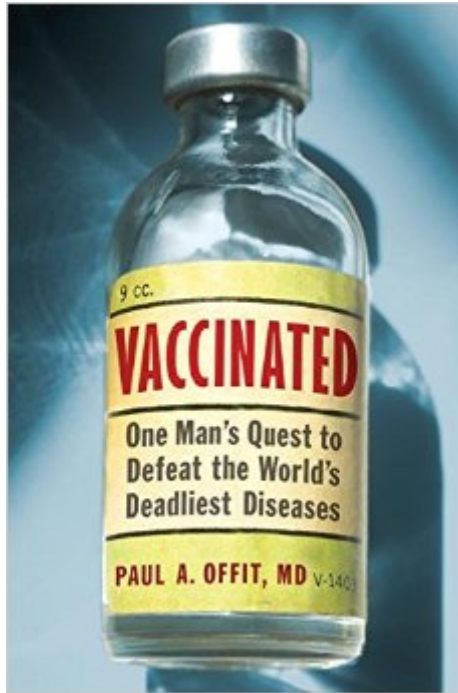


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Vaccinated: One Man's Quest To Defeat The World's Deadliest Diseases



Synopsis

Maurice Hilleman's mother died a day after he was born and his twin sister stillborn. As an adult, he said that he felt he had escaped an appointment with death. He made it his life's work to see that others could do the same. Born into the life of a Montana chicken farmer, Hilleman ran off to the University of Chicago to become a microbiologist, and eventually joined Merck, the pharmaceutical company, to pursue his goal of eliminating childhood disease. Chief among his accomplishments are nine vaccines that practically every child gets, rendering formerly dread diseases—often devastating ones such as mumps and rubella—practically toothless and nearly forgotten; his measles vaccine alone saves several million lives every year. *Vaccinated* is not a biography; Hilleman's experience forms the basis for a rich and lively narrative of two hundred years of medical history, ranging across the globe and throughout time to take in a cast of hundreds, all caught up, intentionally or otherwise, in the story of vaccines. It is an inspiring and triumphant tale, but one with a cautionary aspect, as vaccines come under assault from people blaming vaccines for autism and worse. Paul Offit clearly and compellingly rebuts those arguments, and, by demonstrating how much the work of Hilleman and others has gained for humanity, shows us how much we have to lose.

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Customer Reviews

I hardly know where to start with this book. Probably with...I teach microbiology to nurses, and I'm a rubella baby. That explains a lot in a nutshell for why I picked up this book. I certainly wanted to know more about the man who 'made' or developed a lot of the vaccines (including the MMR

vaccine) which so many people now take for granted. I'm very perplexed as to why I have never heard Hilleman's name before, not in any books, not in med school. I don't care that he worked in corporate America, especially since he didn't profit off of it or gain honors from it. I understand his reasoning for going to work for Merck...they had the money to make things go fast. It sounds as if Hilleman's had an abrasive personality sometimes, which may have rubbed some people the wrong way. If it got things done who cares. Offits gave a lot of good information about the history of vaccination. What drove the need for them, about other people who developed vaccines like Jenner and Pasteur, fights over live versus attenuated vaccines, etc. All of this was written in a very interesting book. I finished it extremely fast...and even read several relevant parts to my current microbiology classes. I guess my main complaint about the book is the 'rose-colored glasses' with which all of it was written with. As a person who survived my mom being exposed to rubella in the womb, and who is Deaf...and who also was given the rubella vaccine in the 1970's when I was 20...and who broke out in full-fledged rubella for 2 whole weeks because the doctors back then did not understand how latent viruses work, I'm kind of an expert on some of this stuff. Yes, I know all about Andrew Wakefield and his idiotic article in Lancet that the media ran with about the MMR vaccine causing autism...I've been fighting against that in my classrooms for years. But at the same time, though vaccines have been mostly good, that does not excuse the inexcusable mistakes made such as Willowbrook, and the giving of hepatitis to disabled students. As a disabled person myself, I'm not going to turn a blind eye to the mistakes American scientists made, supposedly in the pursuit of doing good. The Nazi scientists said the same things when they tested Xylon-B on the Deaf, and disabled. Many of these scientists were people who had private opinions about the 'uselessness' of the Deaf and disabled. Believe me...I went to medical school. I ran into many of these scientists, who thought I had no place in medical school. Please do not offend those of us with differences by pretending all of these men had good motives in their hearts. The author doesn't know for sure, unless he talked to all of them. I'm not saying Hilleman wasn't a great man. He probably was. He didn't do any of the bad unethical cases we've heard about, though I cringed when I heard about him using the contaminated blood for vaccines (I'm from San Francisco Bay Area). I greatly admire what he did, and would have loved working under him. I just personally didn't like all the excuses that Offit was making for some of the men who did do some of the unethical studies.

Vaccines have, obviously, one main purpose—to end crippling diseases and those that are highly contagious or have nasty side effects. Most people are unaware of how vaccines were

developed and how the work in the first place. The author presents the story of Maurice Hilleman, a scientist and researcher who worked on some of the most effective and life altering vaccines of the twentieth century. As the author so rightly points out, until vaccines came along, life expectancy was a lot lower. Vaccines helped to end diseases that were crippling the population and killing many people every year. But, the struggle to manufacture vaccines was not easy. There was a lot of trial and error and more than a few misses in the race to find working vaccines. Hilleman was not the man that actually created the vaccines—he was the man who discovered how to make them efficiently and how to package them for wide distribution. His work cannot be understated in the fight against diseases such as polio, mumps, measles, hepatitis (pick a strain) and numerous other diseases. I would recommend this book to anyone, but in particular to those who are sure that vaccines are the cause of autism. It pretty plainly debunks the most widely held argument against vaccination—that thimerosal is present in every vaccine. It was added when multi use vials were the norm, but now that single use vials are common, it is no longer needed.

Dr. Offit's chronology of Maurice Hilleman's life is not only interesting because of the remarkable ascent and achievements of this virtually unknown genius, but also because Dr. Offit places the development of vaccines into the context of a world that did not have the resources & knowledge of scientists today. Because vaccines have been such a success, the general population no longer knows what it is like to live through a genuine pandemic. We no longer see children living in iron lungs, walking the streets with shriveled limbs, etc. Yet, at one point, Polio was a very common disease. Similarly, we learn why so many schools for the deaf and blind have closed - because general vaccination drives have made the diseases that lead to these outcomes exceedingly rare. As a result, Dr. Offit points out that the current trend towards avoiding vaccinations due to unfounded fears will only result in one certainty: More dead, and crippled children. That is not to say that vaccinations have been an unbridled success from the start. There were issues and outright charlatans then, just as there are now. However, modern science, with its much better reporting, aggregation, and statistical analysis of outcomes has done a fantastic job of minimizing adverse reactions to vaccines, determining cause-and-effect when there were reactions (caused by the vaccine or other unrelated factors). As Dr. Offit illustrates, the certainty with which some parents attribute MMR vaccines to autism issues are simply not supported by the facts; correlation is not causation. All in all, a very powerful and insightful book written by a courageous man. After all, the autism-was-caused-by-a-vaccine bandwagon has not shown any signs yet of abating. All too understandable, I suppose, when the more likely cause of Autism will be found in the genetics of the

parents. It's harder to take ones own blame in a issue than assign it to others.

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