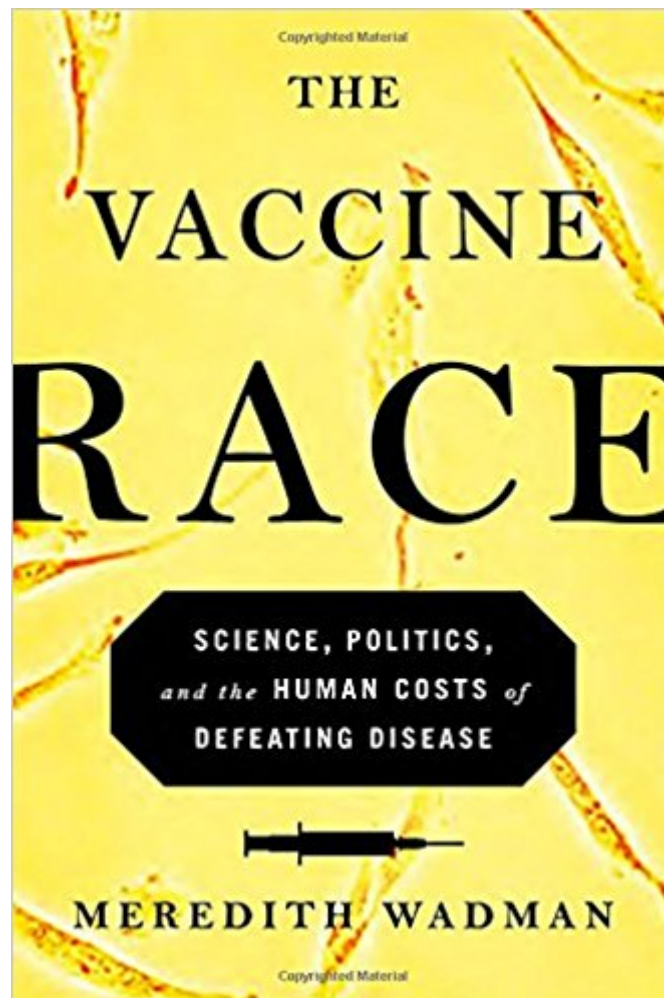




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The Vaccine Race: Science, Politics, And The Human Costs Of Defeating Disease



Synopsis

“Riveting . . . [The Vaccine Race] invites comparison with Rebecca Skloot’s 2007 *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Nature “This is a story about the war against disease—a war without end—and the development of enormously important vaccines, but in telling that story, in showing how science works, Meredith Wadman reveals much more. I loved this book.” John M. Barry, New York Times bestselling author of *The Great Influenza*

The epic and controversial story of a major breakthrough in cell biology that led to the conquest of rubella and other devastating diseases. Until the late 1960s, tens of thousands of American children suffered crippling birth defects if their mothers had been exposed to rubella, popularly known as German measles, while pregnant; there was no vaccine and little understanding of how the disease devastated fetuses. In June 1962, a young biologist in Philadelphia, using tissue extracted from an aborted fetus from Sweden, produced safe, clean cells that allowed the creation of vaccines against rubella and other common childhood diseases. Two years later, in the midst of a devastating German measles epidemic, his colleague developed the vaccine that would one day wipe out homegrown rubella. The rubella vaccine and others made with those fetal cells have protected more than 150 million people in the United States, the vast majority of them preschoolers. The new cells and the method of making them also led to vaccines that have protected billions of people around the world from polio, rabies, chicken pox, measles, hepatitis A, shingles and adenovirus. Meredith Wadman’s masterful account recovers not only the science of this urgent race, but also the political roadblocks that nearly stopped the scientists. She describes the terrible dilemmas of pregnant women exposed to German measles and recounts testing on infants, prisoners, orphans, and the intellectually disabled, which was common in the era. These events take place at the dawn of the battle over using human fetal tissue in research, during the arrival of big commerce in campus labs, and as huge changes take place in the laws and practices governing who “owns” research cells and the profits made from biological inventions. It is also the story of yet one more unrecognized woman whose cells have been used to save countless lives. With another frightening virus imperiling pregnant women on the rise today, no medical story could have more human drama, impact, or urgency today than *The Vaccine Race*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Riveting . . . [The Vaccine Race] invites comparison with Rebecca Skloot’s 2007 *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Nature *“Rich in scientific anecdotes, historical detail and quirky characters. . . She conveys the era’s no-holds-barred approach to science, as well as the altruism of individual scientists and doctors at a time when no one had yet thought of patenting a gene or a living cell”* | her chapter on the stirrings of entrepreneurship among biologists and universities is an enlightening primer on the birth of the biotech industry.” --Washington Post “Meticulously researched and carefully crafted . . . The Vaccine Race, is an enlightening telling of the development of vaccines in the mid-20th century. . . . an intelligent and entertaining tome . . . [and] a comprehensive portrait of the many issues faced in the race to develop vaccines.” Science *“A riveting tale of scientific infighting, clashing personalities, sketchy ethics, and the transformation of cell biology from a sleepy scientific backwater to a high-stakes arena where vast fortunes are made.”* The Wall Street Journal “Meredith Wadman’s fine, new book details the struggle to develop a rubella vaccine • a tale of revolutionary science on the one hand; gloves-off combat on the other. And it confronts a host of hot-button issues, all beautifully explained..reads like a good detective novel.” --David Oshinsky, FASEB Journal “Wadman’s research is extensive, and her book is packed with anecdotes and details of the science, the times, and the people.” The Boston Globe “The Vaccine Race is an important read • for scientists, politicians, physicians, parents and everyone interested in how the world of medical research works. . . . A very compelling read.” The Huffington Post “This is a story about the war against disease--a war without end--and

the development of enormously important vaccines, but in telling that story, in showing how science works, Meredith Wadman reveals much more. Like all wars, that story includes heroism, risk-taking, persistence, and fighting against the odds, and, like all wars, that story also includes politics, obtuseness, bureaucracy, and fights over money. It's very well-written and does not oversimplify yet explains clearly even the purely scientific parts of the story. In short, I loved this book.

• John M. Barry, New York Times bestselling author of *The Great Influenza*

“Meredith Wadman rolls up her sleeves and takes an uncompromising look at the sometimes unethical, often crude, and always rough-and-tumble world of one of the greatest success stories in public health: vaccines. What she finds will no doubt surprise you.”

• Paul A. Offit, MD, author of *Pandora's Lab: Seven Stories of Science Gone Wrong* and *Autism's False Prophets*

“A gripping story with strong resonance in the age of Zika and Ebola--and a powerful reminder of the ways in which researchers approached the ethics of medical testing only fifty years ago.”

• Henry T. Greely, Director of Stanford's Center for Law and the Biosciences and author of *The End of Sex*

“The fascinating story of the scientific battle over--among other important matters--whether human vaccines should be grown in human or animal cells. The hero of this story is Leonard Hayflick, who favored human cells. Fortunately for all of us, he won out.”

• Stanley M. Gartler, Prof. Emeritus, Medical Genetics, University of Washington

“An exemplary piece of medical journalism.”

• *Publisher's Weekly* (starred review)

“An important story well told, featuring the drama and characters needed to make this a candidate for film adaptation.”

• *Kirkus Reviews*

“It is a story of human tragedy and greatness, of curiosity and ambition, of turf battles and ethical lapses, and of what we would call today fake news and alternative facts about the use of cells from an aborted fetus.”

• *Dallas Morning News*

Meredith Wadman has covered biomedical research politics from Washington for twenty years. She is a reporter at *Science* and has written for *Nature*, *Fortune*, the *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. A graduate of Stanford and Columbia, she began medical school at the University of British Columbia and completed her medical degree as a Rhodes scholar at the University of Oxford.

Writers are ever attracted to the development of modern medicine and biochemistry. At the top of my list is the book "Cancer: the Emperor of all Maladies". Next could be "Science Fictions" and the

life of Robert Gallo. Then might be the biography of Paul Berg at Stanford, and gene recombination. Now we have "The Vaccine Race", by Meredith Wadman. These tombs tend to present a challenge to the reader to accommodate the obscure language of Biochemistry. It is a relief that Wadman reads easily. We can accept the ability of viruses to grow in human fetal cells as a simple fact. The life of a research scientist is a thread that runs through these books. After decades of research to the benefit of mankind, something happens to principle investigators. They become autocratic and difficult to work with. Worse, they break the law and the ethics of their profession. Their careers go up in smoke. The strain of cutting edge research and bureaucratic interference is too much to bear. We are humble before the limits of human ambition and endurance. Wadman tells a good story, about the competition between pandemics and vaccines. It takes a few chapters to set her pace and then she takes off. If some chapters are too detailed, we can get the story from the first sentence in each paragraph.

The Vaccine Race is one of the most compelling books I've read in years. It is a book that delves deeply into the complex and troubling history of vaccine development in the United States, but it is more than just a science history. It also is a fascinating study of how some of the nation's brightest scientists, proving both altruistic and flawed, competed to find the next vaccine against ravaging diseases of the time. It is full of juicy details and thoughtful insights about the men and women who toiled away in laboratories to make sure kids could be protected and live long, healthful lives. The sections about Len Hayflick were especially intriguing to me, as they painted a portrait of a man fighting a Don Quixote-like battle to discover the hidden mysteries of the WI-38 cells. He is a flawed hero who owes his successes and failures to his own erratic decisions, and as a reader, I felt drawn into the web of his story and choices. I would recommend this book for anyone who loves absorbing writing and great storytelling.

A well written history of the development of several of the key vaccines, starting in the 1950's and running all the way to the 1990's. Vaccines are one of the most important medical breakthroughs (along with penicillin) of the 20th century responsible for saving hundreds of millions of lives and eradicating some of the most horrible diseases of our time. Yet, we still have doubters and still occasional flare ups when people stop vaccinating! Ms. Wadman weaves together the science (it is not linear, doesn't happen without setbacks and often corner cutting!), politics, legal and ethical issues using several larger than life personalities to do so. Provides a great base for understanding some of the key battles that exist to this day.

When I started this book I knew nothing about immunology. I'm not even a scientist. But from the beginning, I was hooked. There were heroes and villains, drama, a captivating story, and lots of fascinating information. Highly recommended.

The Vaccine Race gets five stars because it's a handicap race --- ie given that it's a book about boring science, it's at least four stars, so it gets five stars from me. It's about Leonard Hayflick and his cultured animal cells. See? Doesn't that leave you cold? It's so arcane and esoteric, you never heard of him, and have only a hazy idea what's up with "cultured animal cells", although since that book came out about Henrietta Lacks and her HeLa cells, we now have quite a few people who have more than a hazy idea of what that's all about, which is good. I'm from Philadelphia and went to Penn and even knew a little bit about the Wistar INstitute at 36th and Pine, so I'm a good judge of whether Ms Wadman did a good job here of giving the flavor of the times and the scientific backdrop for what these guys were doing. She did a fine job of reporting, and it's well written and pretty interesting. I hope a lot of people read The Vaccine Race because one way or another you'll all get to know a lot more about vaccines like MMR ; and vaccines in general; all of which is important. Hell, it's CRUCIAL! Everybody should have some idea of the PROCESS involved. Read it.

Item as described

This is an excellent book - I don't write many reviews but this book as he licked - I can't leave it down - if you work on the pharma industry like me you just got to read this book

Could not hold my attention. Could I sell it back to you cheap ?

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