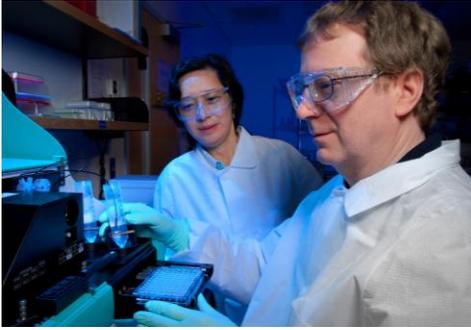


CDC: Decades of saving lives and protecting people



James Gathany, CDC

From its humble beginnings of fighting malaria in War Areas in 1946, CDC works 24/7 to save lives, protect people and save money through prevention for the nation and for people around the globe. For more than six decades, CDC has guarded people against infectious and noninfectious diseases, responded to dangers caused by injuries, workplace hazards, disabilities and environmental health threats, thereby increasing opportunities for longer, more productive lives for all people.

CDC was at the forefront of the major public health achievements of the first 10 years of the 21st century, including improvements in vaccine preventable and infectious diseases, reduction in deaths from chronic diseases, declines in deaths and injuries from motor vehicle accidents, and more, according to a report published in CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* on May 19, 2011. In addition to saving lives and protecting people, the United States has saved billions of dollars in healthcare costs as a result of these achievements.

But, what would happen if CDC had gone away for a day, a month, a year, or possibly forever? What would it be like if CDC never existed? How would the nation be impacted?

Without CDC, you may not have seen the efforts to track and control polio. Polio brought fear to almost every home in the 1950s. But with CDC's efforts to track and control polio, the dreaded condition was almost totally eliminated from the United States and other parts of Western Hemisphere by 1991. Today, polio remains endemic in four countries (Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan), and three other countries (Angola, Chad and Democratic Republic of the Congo) have experienced re-established transmission of the poliovirus. To strengthen efforts to eradicate polio, CDC joined major partners, such as WHO, Rotary International, UNICEF, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and USAID, in declaring polio a public health emergency with the goal of total eradication by the end of 2012. On December 2, 2011, CDC activated its Emergency Operations Center to scale up efforts to eradicate polio.

Smallpox caused millions of deaths for many centuries. During the mid-1960s, CDC launched the Smallpox Eradication Program. As a result, the disease was practically eradicated in the United States and other parts of Western Hemisphere by the late 1970s. Without CDC and the measures recommended, countless lives may have been lost to this disease.

CDC disease detectives discovered in 1976 the cause of what is now known as Legionnaires' disease. The pneumonia illness, caused by a bacteria commonly found in water, was discovered in veterans

attending an American Legion convention at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia. Since its discovery, improvements have been made in diagnostic testing for Legionnaires' disease. Also, CDC now conducts enhanced surveillance to detect and respond to outbreaks. The illness still impacts health and results in between 8,000 and 18,000 people being hospitalized each year in the United States. These guidelines resulted in CDC being there to safeguard and protect people worldwide from the deadly disease.

In 1981, CDC responded to the threat of the first reported case of a mysterious illness known today as AIDS, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. AIDS has taken the lives of more than 500,000 Americans. Today, almost 1.2 million people in the United States are living with HIV, the virus that can develop into AIDS. It is estimated that prevention efforts have prevented more than 350,000 HIV infections and has saved an estimated \$125 billion in medical cost in the US. CDC's existence has helped lead the effort for continuing prevention that has helped keep the number of new infections in this country stable over the last decade.

In the 1990s, CDC added "prevention" to its name to reflect expanding public health initiatives that include efforts to reduce tobacco use, particularly among young people. CDC also helps promote the use of folic acid among women of childbearing age to prevent neural tube defects. In 1998, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) established regulations that required all standardized enriched cereal grain products sold in the United States to include 140µg folic acid/100 g and provided for the addition of folic acid to breakfast cereals, corn grits, infant formulas, medical foods, and foods for special dietary use. Before fortification, about 4,130 pregnancies were affected by neural tube defects each year in the US, with nearly 1,200 related deaths. After folic acid fortification, the yearly number of pregnancies affected by neural tube defects dropped to about 3,000, and the related deaths declined to 840.

The new millennium brought unprecedented risks to public safety with the air attack on the World Trade Center and bioterrorism attacks using anthrax spores as a weapon. Since 2001, CDC has worked around the clock to save lives and help protect the nation and other countries by responding to nearly 50 emergency disasters involving foodborne, influenza, including H1N1, and other infectious disease outbreaks, natural disasters such as hurricanes, tsunamis, tropical storm, wildfires, and earthquakes; and environmental emergencies such as deep-water horizon oil spills and radiation leaks in Japan.

CDC is proud of its achievements and grateful to have had the public trust to serve our nation since 1946. The agency is not slowing down, and has no intention of letting down its guard for a day, a month, a year or anytime in the foreseeable future. CDC is currently leading the way with programs that reduce the health and economic consequences of the leading causes of death and disability, saving lives, protecting people and saving money through prevention. CDC looks forward to continuing its service for many decades and generations to come working to realize the vision of a healthy and safe nation.

For more information, visit CDC's Web site at www.cdc.gov/24-7.

CDC 24/7: Saving lives. Protecting people. Saving money through prevention.