

"The Malaria Project: The U.S. Government's Secret Mission to Find a Miracle Cure"

Karen M. Masterson, 2014, 406 pages, New American Library, \$26.95

Review by Norman M. Goldfarb

"The Malaria Project: The U.S. Government's Secret Mission to Find a Miracle Cure" describes the search to find a cure and preventative measures for malaria, with a focus on U.S. efforts during World War II, when the disease took a greater toll on Allied forces than the Japanese. Malaria is still an endemic disease in many countries, killing over 600,000 people per year and disabling many others. Aside from telling a fascinating story, the book provides a case study for future epidemics.

In some cases, the research crossed ethical boundaries. Claus Schilling, a German physician, deliberately infected concentration camp inmates so he could test malaria treatments on them. He was executed after the war. Lowell Coggeshall, a U.S. physician, deliberately infected prison and mental ward inmates so he could test malaria treatments on them, even after the Nuremberg Code had been published. He won the Gorgas Medal of the Association of Military Surgeons and was elected to the National Academy of Sciences. Unlike Dr. Schilling, Dr. Coggeshall obtained informed consent (at least from the prisoners), but, apparently, the concept of vulnerability was not seriously addressed. Both physicians were motivated by the urgent need to find a cure. Dr. Schilling's research was less ethical than Dr. Coggeshall's research, but Dr. Coggeshall's hands were far from clean. In the next serious epidemic, we may be faced with similar ethical dilemmas.

The book consists of 31 chapters:

- Introduction: A Brief History
- Lowell T. Coggeshall
- Fever Therapy
- Making of a Malaria Warrior
- From Insects to Medicine
- A Nobel Prize
- Divided Loyalties
- Germany and Magic Bullets
- Eradication
- Claus Schilling
- A New Plan
- Africa
- Bataan
- War on Mosquitoes
- Guadalcanal
- A Malaria Manhattan Project
- Better to Be Yellow
- The Other Side
- Taking Tunis
- Mosquito Brigades

- The Jump
- Malaria and the Madmen
- The Convicts
- Supply and Demand
- Whoville
- The Breakthrough
- Stateville
- Taking Command
- Klamath Falls Victory of Sorts
- Victory of Sorts
- A Miracle of Sorts

The book is available in bookstores.

Reviewer

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