

Dr. Saul Krugman's Acceptance Remarks

I am deeply honored and very pleased to share this Award with my distinguished colleague, Dr. Maurice Hilleman, who in my opinion has been a "national resource" in the field of vaccine development during the past 25 years. The development and extensive use of various vaccines since the 1950's have had an extraordinary impact on the health and welfare of children.

In 1946 when I returned from World War II service in the South Pacific I joined the staff of Willard Parker Communicable Disease Hospital formerly located at the foot of East 15th Street and the East River. My experience in this institution motivated me to devote my career to the prevention of infectious diseases of children. I can recall so vividly four of my former patients in July 1946: 1) an attractive, bright, lovable 5 year-old boy- presumably recovering from diphtheria but suddenly one morning he had a cardiac arrest and died (postmortem-diphtheritic myocarditis); 2) a 3 month-old infant with severe whooping cough whose cyanotic spells were subsequently responsible for severe brain damage and profound retardation; 3) a young girl with measles complicated by encephalitis, coma and death, and 4) a child with bulbar polio and extensive paralysis - destined to live the remaining years of her life in an "iron lung."

To-day, diphtheria, pertussis, measles and polio are rare diseases in the United States. The devastating consequences of rubella in pregnancy (congenital cataracts, deafness, heart disease and mental retardation) have been virtually eliminated. The strategy for the use of DTP and poliovaccine as well as measles and rubella vaccines has proved to be extraordinarily successful in controlling these diseases in the United States.

The recent development and future increased use of hepatitis B vaccine will have worldwide implications for the control of this serious disease. It should be noted that about 5000 persons in the United States die each year of

hepatitis B related fulminant hepatitis, cirrhosis, or primary cancer of the liver; the number of annual deaths worldwide is about 3 million. During the past 3 years when AIDS was responsible for 900 deaths, hepatitis B caused the death of 15,000 persons. It is of course too early to assess the impact of the hepatitis B vaccine - licensed in Nov. 1981 and first distributed in July 1982.

The challenge for the remaining years of this century is formidable. The vaccine preventable diseases that have been virtually conquered in the United States continue to be highly prevalent in most developing and even certain developed nations of the world. WHO surveys have revealed that worldwide about 5 million infants and children die of these preventable diseases each year. That means that during the course of this Medical Awards Luncheon about 1000 children throughout the world will die of vaccine preventable diseases.

I accept this Award with deep humility because I know that the achievements that led to the control of measles and rubella in the United States and the development of hepatitis B vaccine and the efforts of WHO to control vaccine preventable diseases by the end of this century represent the culmination of outstanding contributions by many individuals supported by various government agencies, industry, foundations - especially the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation - blessed by a leader - Mary Lasker - whose potent antigenic stimulus has induced Senator Weicker and his colleagues in the Senate and Congress to allocate the funds so essential for basic and clinical research.