



Polio Australia Incorporated

Representing polio survivors throughout Australia



e-Bulletin January Reflections 2012

Where has the month gone? We were only recently wishing people Happy New Year and now the holidays are over and the children are back at school! It's already shaping up to be a big year for Polio Australia, with arrangements for our third Health and Wellness Retreat being held on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, in April well under way. And it's good news for India in their war against polio, having achieved one year without a single case. The Australian Polio Register continues to grow steadily and, following a request from the UK, we were in the happy position of being able to join up two long lost friends as one is now living in Australia and on the Register. Luckily the Australian friend wanted to be reunited!

Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each new year find you a better man.
~Benjamin Franklin

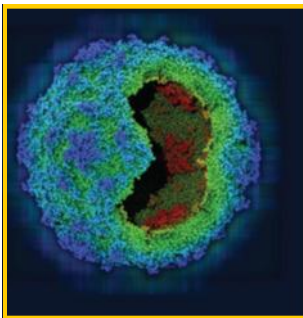
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Constructing the Polio Virus - One Atom at a Time

by Tim Thwaites, Science Writer

Source: "**Victorian Life Sciences Computation Initiative (VLSCI)**" – 26 September 2011



A cutaway image of the capsid or protein shell of a Poliovirus formed from a 3.7 million-atom simulation.

Image credit: Jason Roberts

Dr Jason Roberts [who works in the Poliovirus Reference Laboratory at the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory] can now use his model to study how the virus interacts with water, how its shape changes with temperature, what happens when a mutation affects the structure of one of the proteins, where drugs dock and the impact they have. And he can compare wild polio virus with the attenuated varieties used in vaccines – all inside the computer.

The work is important because, even though polio has been eradicated from Australia and most of the rest of the world, there are still significant issues, says Dr Bruce Thorley, the head of the Polio Reference Laboratory. For instance, while the Sabin oral vaccine has made mass vaccination possible on a global scale, the disabled poliovirus at the heart of it can revert to an active, infectious state in areas where vaccination levels are low. Research to counter that problem will be boosted by the new simulation. Read more [here](#).

Dr John Gets a Gong!

We are delighted to announce that Polio Australia's National Patron, Dr John Tierney (*photo right*), was awarded an Order of Australia Medal on Australia Day for services to parliament, education and the community. Dr Tierney's achievements include being a Liberal Senator for New South Wales Parliament of Australia from 1991-2005. He contracted polio soon after he was born and although he initially recovered he now lives with the late effects of polio. Dr Tierney's advocacy role with Polio Australia now targets State and Federal governments to recognise the condition.



Polio Benefit Bill Passed by Knesset Committee

by Chana Ya'ar

Source: "[Arutz Sheva](#)" – 2 January 2012

A Knesset committee has approved a bill that would ensure all polio patients receive the same benefits, including new immigrants.

A bill to prevent discrimination in the allocation of benefits to people suffering with polio has been passed for its first reading by the Knesset's Labor, Welfare and Health Committee.

The law would end discrimination between polio patients receiving aid whose history with the disease began prior to their aliyah to Israel, and those who acquired the disease while living in the country. Read full article [here](#).



Knesset
Israel news photo: Flash 90

Award Win Has Director Thinking of Home

by Ed Gibbs

Source: "[The Age](#)" – 31 January 2012



Ben Lewin

He has happily lived a "gypsy life" across three continents but writer-director Ben Lewin, whose film *The Surrogate* won two awards at the Sundance Film Festival on Saturday, wants to come home. The 65-year-old Melbourne filmmaker, who has been based in Los Angeles since 1994, believes the time is right to make his next feature in Victoria. He also wants his daughter to have a thoroughly Australian outlook on life.

The Surrogate tells of journalist Mark O'Brien's battle with polio and his bid to lose his virginity, age 38, while having to exist within an iron lung. The film, which stars John Hawkes as O'Brien, Helen Hunt as the "surrogate" he turns to for sex and William H. Macy as a priest, has been enjoying considerable industry buzz following its world premiere at Sundance last week, where it received a standing ovation. Fox bought the film for a reported \$US6 million (\$A5.6 million) and there

is already talk about its chance at next year's Oscars.

"I'm trying to make a splash in America to get Australia's attention," Lewin says, laughing, after *The Surrogate* took out the audience award and won a jury prize for its ensemble cast. *"Practically everyone in Australia passed on The Surrogate. Yet the movie has an Australian writer, director, producer, cameraman, costume designer and Australian finance - from a bunch of Melbourne businessmen. Australia is no longer the bargain-basement place to make a movie - there are tax breaks everywhere - but I'd like to come back."*

"The Sundance experience has been phenomenal," Lewin says. *"But I'm not about to get caught up with any buzz. If I had to make Mark's story for 100,000 bucks, I would have. For many years I got sick of writing, so I'm glad I can say that I'm a competent filmmaker and a competent parent. I'm having fun at the moment, standing up for grey power. There's nothing like having some sort of rebirth, at my age."* Read full article [here](#).

India Marks 1 Year Polio Free For the First Time in History

January marked a historic milestone in the fight against preventable disease - the first 12 months without a case of polio in India's history.

India, one of only four remaining polio endemic countries in the world, has long battled to get the upper hand in the fight against polio. As recently as 2009, it recorded the highest number of polio cases *in the world*. Many said it would never stop the spread. But since then, nationwide collaboration has changed this story. An army of vaccinators, religious leaders, community and health workers has worked with the Indian government to immunise at risk children - visiting homes, schools, brick kilns, remote communities and mobile migrant groups, they have delivered 780 million vaccinations a year.

Their achievement is remarkable, and demonstrates just what is possible in the fight against extreme poverty and preventable disease. That's why we're supporting the Global Poverty Project's call to send messages of support to India's polio eradication team.

[Join us, and Indian cricketing legend B.S. Chandrasekhar, in sending a message of support to the millions who have been involved in India's polio eradication efforts.](#)

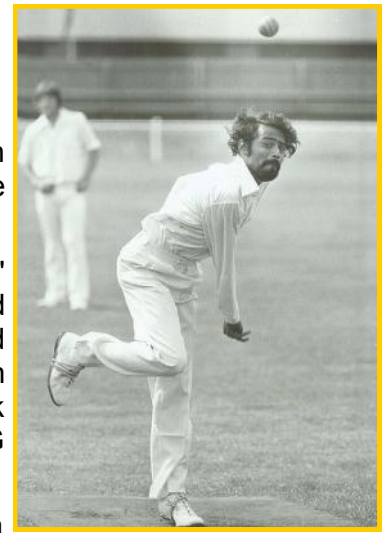
Chandra Back to Inspire India

by Chloe Saltau

Source: "The Age" – 13 January 2012

If anyone can inspire an Indian revival in this series it is Bhagwath Chandrasekhar, who is a special guest at the Perth Test to celebrate the passing of a year since the last case of polio was reported in India.

Former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar once said he never saw "Chandra" without his shirt on, as he was self-conscious about the right wrist, arm and shoulder that did not fully develop because of the polio virus he was diagnosed with as a boy. But in the summer of 1977-78 that withered arm destroyed an Australian team ravaged by World Series Cricket. Leg spinner "Chandra" took 28 wickets in that series and bowled India to its first win in Australia at the MCG with 6-52 in both innings.



Bhagwath Chandrasekhar practises at Albert Park in 1977

Chandra, who is now 66 and walks with the aid of crutches as a result of a separate accident, is a remarkable man who has more recently been part of a battle much bigger than even he imagined, the Global Polio Eradication Project.

Today is a milestone of immense significance, for it marks one year since a two-year-old girl in the state of West Bengal was diagnosed with polio, the last case reported in India.

India was once the world epicentre for the virus and the progress is the result of a mind-boggling eradication effort that has 170 million children aged under five vaccinated each year. Read [more](#) . . .

Malnourishment Major Obstacle to Polio Eradication

by M. Waqar Bhatti

Source: "The News" - 10 January 2012

Sindh Health Minister Dr Sagheer Ahmed on Monday identified decreasing routine immunization and growing malnourishment among children under five as some of the major impediments to the eradication of polio from the province.

"When we look at the polio-positive cases of 2011 in the province, in most of the cases, children had either zero doses or they had multiple doses of the Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) but those who received OPV doses were found out to be extremely malnourished," he told the participants of a seminar on 'Paediatric Infectious Disease: Insights from Local Research' at the Aga Khan University.

The minister said being a political person, it was easy for him to declare that polio would be eradicated from the province by 2013 but in reality, it was not possible unless issues related to polio prevalence in the country, especially the province, were identified and tackled. Read full article [here](#).

India's Polio Victory Fuels Vaccine Talks

Source: "Reuters" - 12 January 2012



Albert Sabin

When the clocks strike midnight in New Delhi on January 12, India will mark the first year in history it has recorded no new cases of [polio](#).

It's a huge milestone for a country many experts thought would be the last place on earth to get rid of the crippling virus. And it's an exciting step forward for global health workers battling to make polio only the second human infectious disease after smallpox to be eradicated.

"If all the data comes in clear over the next few weeks, then India, for the first time, will show up as an unshaded area on WHO polio maps," said Sona Bari of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#).

At the heart of the issue are oral polio vaccines, which are highly effective and owe much of their success to the fact they are cheap, easy to deliver and contain live polio virus strains.

Because type 2 has already been eliminated, a three-strain oral vaccine called tOPV is being phased out in favour of a bivalent or two-strain one called bOPV which fights type 1 and type 3. But the problem remains that the viruses are live.

2012 Polio Health and Wellness Retreat



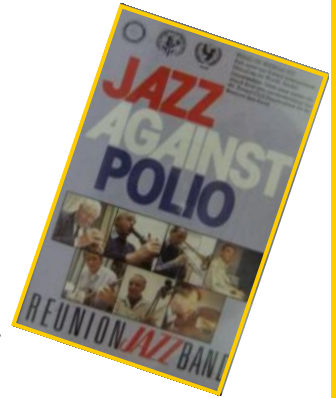
Polio Australia is running its third Retreat on Queensland's beautiful Sunshine Coast from Thursday 26th to Sunday 29th of April 2012. This year promises to build on previous sessions and participant feedback to present a range of self-management techniques which will enable participants to achieve general wellbeing, as well as providing options for people to remain as mobile and independent as possible.

The Registration Form, Program and Presenters List can all be viewed and downloaded [here](#). Book early to avoid disappointment as there are only 70 places available.

Jazz Against Polio

by Martin Fisher, Member, Mornington Peninsula Post-Polio Support Group, Victoria

Greetings to all at Polio Oz. Recently I was looking through a box of music cassettes at the local salvo shop and noticed one titled "Jazz against polio" and I thought, WOW! Isn't that interesting? This cassette features trad type jazz music by the Dutch REUNION JAZZ BAND. It is dated 1986 and was a joint project between Rotary International, Unicef and WHO. The proceeds were going towards the purchase and distribution of the polio vaccine into third world countries to eradicate polio worldwide. The information supplied with the cassette states that (in 1986) "polio is the cause of 50,000 deaths every year in the third world" and "5,000,000 people are made invalid by this disease".



So, here we are some 25 years after this project started and they have almost reached their goal, with just a few small pockets to go. I shall keep this cassette as it is an interesting piece of polio history and goes to show how long the 'push to give polio the boot worldwide' has been going on. If you Google "[jazz against polio](#)" you will see that a LP record was also produced.

Polio this week as of Wednesday 25 January 2012

Total cases	Year-to-date 2011			Year-to-date 2010		
Globally	644			946		
• in endemic countries:	335			231		
• in non-endemic countries:	309			715		

Countries	Year-to-date 2011			Year-to-date 2010		
	WPV1	WPV3	Total	WPV1	WPV3	Total
Pakistan	195	2	197	120	24	144
Afghanistan	80		80	17	8	25
Nigeria	44	13	57	8	12	20
India	1		1	18	24	42
Chad	129	3	132	8	14	22
DR Congo	92		92	93		93
Angola	5		5	32		32
CAR	4		4			
Niger	3	2	5		2	2
Cameroon		1	1			
China	21		21			
Guinea		3	3			
Kenya	1		1			
Côte d'Ivoire		36	36			
Mali		7	7	3	1	4
Congo	1		1	50		50
Gabon	1		1			
Uganda				4		4
Russian Federation				14		14
Liberia				2		2
Nepal				6		6
Kazakhstan				1		1
Tajikistan				458		458
Turkmenistan				3		3
Senegal				18		18
Sierra Leone				1		1
Total	577	67	644	861	85	946
Total in endemic countries	320	15	335	163	68	231
Total outbreak	257	52	309	698	17	715

Source: Polio Global Eradication Initiative

Data in WHO as of 25 Jan 2011 for 2010 data and 24 Jan 2012 for 2011 data.

*The 2010 total for Congo includes cases with inadequate specimens that have been exceptionally classified as confirmed polio based

