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Adventures in Science: Interview with Thomas M. Rivers

Extracted on Apr-19-2024 04:59:25

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<i>Thomas M. Rivers</i>: Only 34 million of these, however, have had all three shots. And it is necessary to have three shots, properly spaced, in order to get the full amount of protection.

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<i>Thomas M. Rivers</i>: That means, that 45 million people under 40 years of age have had no vaccine at all. And this is the sad part, 15 million of these are under 20 years of age. And that is a very susceptible group.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: Well Dr. Rivers, you mentioned -- You didn't mention those over 40. Why is that? Are they less susceptible?

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<i>Thomas M. Rivers</i>: 98% of paralysis occurs in people 40 and under, years of age. And for public health reasons, one has to cut off and the cut off has been at 40. That doesn't mean that those over 40, if they wish it, shouldn't take it.

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<i>Thomas M. Rivers</i>: Because we do know of people, and I know of a doctor who was 55 years old, who contracted the disease. So those over 40 who want it, may take it.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: But, actually, the very large number of people who haven't yet had the vaccine and, unlike the early days of the vaccine when parents were crying for it, it is available right now, isn't it?

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<i>Thomas M. Rivers</i>: There's a great abundance of it at the present time and people are not using it as they should.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: Actually, some of the manufacturers, due to the expiration dates on the vaccine have had to destroy some.

<i>Thomas M. Rivers</i>: Correct.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: Well that's a rather shocking thing, isn't it?

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<i>Thomas M. Rivers</i>: It is, it is.

<i>Watson Davis</i>: Well, under those circumstances, don't you think that during this month for the National Foundation's campaign, it'd be a wise thing for people to go to see their doctors and get these shots?

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<i>Thomas M. Rivers</i>: Well, the president's birthday is on the 30th of January. And I think that's a good date to remember, President

Roosevelt's birthday is on the 30th of January.

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<i>Thomas M. Rivers</i>: And why don't all the people who have not received the vaccine make it a point to see the doctor before the 30th of January and get a shot.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: Well that'd be a very good idea, Doctor, let's see if we can get that across.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: And, of course, while we're talking about this campaign month, I think we ought to explain that while the vaccine has been developed and you supervised, I believe, the production of this for the Foundation under a committee, the Salk Vaccine Committee.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: And you've been chairman of the Virus Research Committee of the national foundation since 1938, I believe, until you became medical director.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: Well, under those circumstances, we ought to explain that there's a great deal to be done in this Polio field still. Even though there are this large number protected, a large number also unprotected.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: And under those circumstances, this March of Dimes is a very proper thing to have and the money that's being raised will be used for patient care, and there are a lot of them that still need a lot of care.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: Also, which is equally important, more important for the future, it'll be used for research. It's going to be -- There's a great deal to be done in research yet, isn't there?

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<i>Thomas M. Rivers</i>: A great deal to be done in research on Polio and, as you know, we will broaden our field and include other viruses in research.

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<i>Watson Davis</i>: What about, what are some of the other virus diseases, Dr. Rivers, some of those that will have to be tackled in the future.



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