

# MISCELLANEOUS

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## SMALLPOX ERADICATION

The global eradication of smallpox is a unique achievement in the history of medicine and public health.

Since ancient times, smallpox has been one of the major scourges of mankind. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this disease was still claiming victims in virtually every country in the world. However, after 1966, when the World Health Assembly recommended an intensified campaign to eradicate smallpox, progress was rapid. In 1977, its global eradication appeared to be imminent and on 8 May 1980, the World Health Assembly unanimously accepted the conclusions of the Global Commission for the Certification of Smallpox Eradication, namely, that "smallpox eradication has been achieved throughout the world", and that "there is no evidence that smallpox will return as an endemic disease".

In the publication<sup>1</sup> containing the Global Commission's report, the evidence upon which these conclusions are based is carefully presented and discussed. Furthermore, the Commission has also included recommendations on policy for the post-eradication era to ensure that this achievement is permanent. Among those recommendations are the discontinuation of smallpox vaccination, the continuation of investigation of reports of suspected smallpox and of the surveillance and research of monkeypox (a disease resembling smallpox clinically) in west and central Africa, the supervision of stocks and use of variola virus in laboratories, and measures designed to ensure that laboratory and epidemiological expertise in human poxvirus infections should not be dissipated.

(From *Médecine et Hygiène*,  
No 1444, Geneva, 1981, p. 3842.)

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<sup>1</sup> *The Global Eradication of Smallpox. Final Report of the Global Commission for the Certification of Smallpox Eradication*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 1980 (History of International Public Health, No 4), 135 pages.