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## END POLIO NOW NEWSLETTER

December 2017

Take action to End Polio Now



### From country doctor to international epidemiologist

When Dr. Jay Wenger began his medical career, he thought he'd be a country doctor — a general practitioner serving the health needs of a small community. Life took him on a different path, though, and now he's the director of the polio eradication program at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as an international polio expert.

In this interview, Wenger talks about his work as an epidemiologist, what led him to get involved with polio eradication, and why ending polio for good is so important.

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[Using mobile phones to fight polio](#)

Community health workers are the front lines of any polio vaccination campaign. They go door to door and stand at busy intersections, train stations, and bus stations to make sure every child is immunized against polio. And with the disease thriving in only a few remote areas in three countries, it's up to these health workers to deliver vaccines and share information with speed and accuracy.



In Pakistan, Rotary has been working to replace traditional paper-based reporting with mobile phone and e-monitoring technologies. Community health workers have received more than 800 mobile phones, with a goal to distribute 5,000 by the end of 2018.

Health workers can use the phones to send crucial data by text message. If they see a potential polio case, they can alert officials immediately. They can also note instances of children not receiving the vaccine, parents refusing it, and successful immunizations. The result is a collection of real-time information that officials can easily monitor and assess.

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## Miles to End Polio update

On 18 November, Rotary General Secretary John Hewko and a team of Rotary staff joined Rotary senior leaders, members from Arizona, and around the world in El Tour de Tucson to raise funds for polio eradication. The team raised \$3.9 million and thanks to the 2 to 1 match through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a total of \$11.75 million will be donated to End Polio Now.

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## A visual way to understand polio

The World Health Organization has produced a series of animated videos to explain polio eradication efforts. These videos offer short, simple answers to some of the biggest polio questions, including:

[How do we monitor for the poliovirus?](#)

[How do we immunize millions of children in multiple countries?](#)

[How do we respond to a polio outbreak?](#)

Share these videos on your social media networks, or show them at your club meeting or next event to explain our efforts to end polio once and for all.

## Did you know...?

The March of Dimes was originally called the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFIP). U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, himself a polio survivor, founded it on 3 January 1938 in part to fund research for a polio vaccine.

In the early 1950s, Dr. Jonas Salk used funding he received from a March of Dimes grant to create a vaccine that was “safe, effective, and potent,” in the words of Dr. Thomas Francis Jr., director of the Poliomyelitis Vaccine Evaluation Center at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. In 1954, the vaccine was tested in a massive trial that involved 1.8 million U.S. schoolchildren known as “polio pioneers.” Since it became available in 1955, the polio vaccine has reduced polio outbreaks worldwide by 99.9 percent.



Since it completed its initial goal of finding a polio vaccine, the March of Dimes has turned its focus to improving the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. Nevertheless, March of Dimes was an early pioneer in polio eradication efforts. The March of Dimes marks its 80th anniversary in 2018.

[Learn about March of Dimes' history in polio eradication.](#)

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## Club activities

**Pints for Polio** is a four-month-long fundraiser for polio eradication supported by the assistant governors of District 7570 (western Virginia and northern Tennessee, USA). Each area in the district partners with a local craft brewery to host an event that raises awareness of polio and solicits funds for eradication efforts. The competition officially came to a close on 26 November, having brought in more than \$42,000.



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The Rotary Club of Sofia-Serdika, Bulgaria, placed a donation box at the Sofia Airport to raise funds for polio.

The Rotary Club of Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, organized the **Brunei End Polio Ride 2017** in September. More than 180 cyclists participated, riding up to 40 kilometers for polio.

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Over 200 spectators and 50 wrestlers took part in an arm wrestling competition organized by the Rotary Club of Rahim Yar Khan Rohi, Punjab, Pakistan, to raise awareness of polio. The event started with a match between Mumtaz Baig, a member of the Pakistan PolioPlus Committee, and the club president, Ahmed Awais Arif.



Let's tell the world we are  
**PEOPLE OF ACTION**  
GET STARTED TODAY!



## In the news

**Forbes India** took an in-depth look at how philanthropists can advance large-scale social change programs. Rotary's efforts to eradicate polio in India were highlighted as an example of a great social-change program.

**Undark** follows health workers in Kano, Nigeria, as they vaccinate local children. The article offers a powerful perspective on the dangers health workers face in an effort to protect children from polio.

NPR moderated a panel discussion and webcast titled "**Can The World Finally Wipe Out Polio?**" Rotary's International PolioPlus Committee Chair Michael K. McGovern discussed ongoing efforts to fight polio and what steps are needed to end transmission.

**Our World in Data** explains the history of polio through research and data visualization, including treatments, the rise of the vaccine, and the global decline of polio. Rotary is mentioned in the section about the global decline of polio.

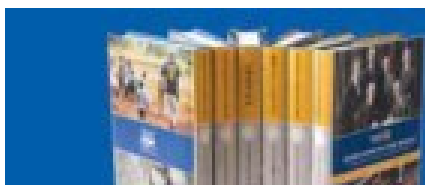


Alina A. Visram first joined the Pakistan PolioPlus Committee as a manager eight years ago. In her Rotary Voices [blog post](#), Visram explains why she is convinced that polio will be eradicated in Pakistan.

## Triple your impact

Thanks to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, your contribution will be matched 2 to 1, getting us even closer to a polio-free world.

[DONATE NOW](#)



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