

WEEK 17 FOUNDATION MINUTE – THE PRICE OF POLIO

When you go to your Rotary club meeting this week, look around at your fellow members and think about this: In North America, anyone younger than 70 likely doesn't remember a time before the polio vaccine. Those under 40 were born after polio was no longer endemic in the United States. And among your club's youngest members, the very word "polio" probably conjures a bygone age when children regularly died of diseases like measles, smallpox, or whooping cough. Now, however, we know that measles is staging a comeback. Tuberculosis, which might bring to mind 19th-century sanitariums, is gaining greater resistance to treatment. Until a disease is really gone, eradicated, extirpated from the planet, it will always be looking for ways to come back, for breaches in our defenses.

We've come very far in the 64 years since the introduction of Jonas Salk's vaccine — and especially in the 40 years since Rotary decided to take on polio. Every day it gets easier to forget why it's so critical that we eradicate this disease. Most of us don't see polio in our daily lives. Whole generations have never experienced its terrifying power.

We let our guard down when we think that polio is a disease that happens only in faraway places, or that almost eradicated is good enough. But if we stop and remember what it was like when polio was everywhere and people felt powerless against it, we know that if we don't finish the fight, we'll soon be back where we started.

Please ponder what your legacy will be in this fight – the finish line is in view – but we still need to vaccinate until we reach it. **The children need you.**

*From Rotary International Press Center - **Vanessa Glavinskas***