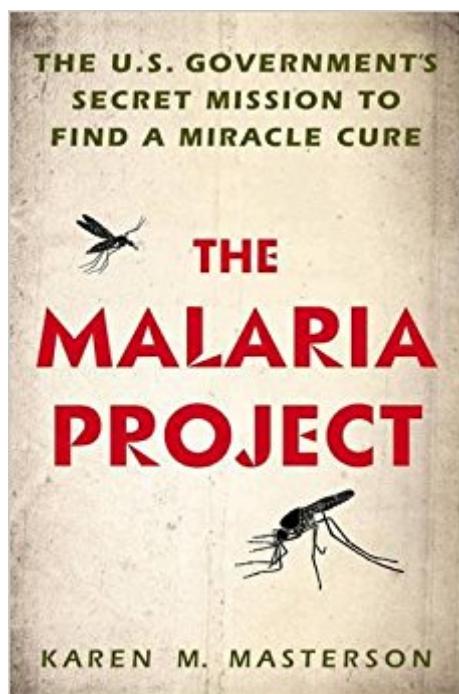


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The Malaria Project: The U.S. Government's Secret Mission To Find A Miracle Cure



Synopsis

A fascinating and shocking historical exposé, The Malaria Project is the story of America's secret mission to combat malaria during World War II—a campaign modeled after a German project which tested experimental drugs on men gone mad from syphilis. American war planners, foreseeing the tactical need for a malaria drug, recreated the German model, then grew it tenfold. Quickly becoming the biggest and most important medical initiative of the war, the project tasked dozens of the country's top research scientists and university labs to find a treatment to remedy half a million U.S. troops incapacitated by malaria. Spearheading the new U.S. effort was Dr. Lowell T. Coggeshall, the son of a poor Indiana farmer whose persistent drive and curiosity led him to become one of the most innovative thinkers in solving the malaria problem. He recruited private corporations, such as today's Squibb and Eli Lilly, and the nation's best chemists out of Harvard and Johns Hopkins to make novel compounds that skilled technicians tested on birds. Giants in the field of clinical research, including the future NIH director James Shannon, then tested the drugs on mental health patients and convicted criminals—including infamous murderer Nathan Leopold. By 1943, a dozen strains of malaria brought home in the veins of sick soldiers were injected into these human guinea pigs for drug studies. After hundreds of trials and many deaths, they found their “magic bullet,” but not in a U.S. laboratory. America's best weapon against malaria, still used today, was captured in battle from the Nazis. Called chloroquine, it went on to save more lives than any other drug in history. Karen M. Masterson, a journalist turned malaria researcher, uncovers the complete story behind this dark tale of science, medicine and war. Illuminating, riveting and surprising, The Malaria Project captures the ethical perils of seeking treatments for disease while ignoring the human condition.

Book Information

Hardcover: 416 pages

Publisher: NAL; 1 edition (October 7, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0451467329

ISBN-13: 978-0451467324

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1.4 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 18 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,182,289 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #43 in Books > Medical

Customer Reviews

“The outbreak of World War II pushed malaria up the American agenda. Troops found themselves in many highly infected areas, including Africa, the southern Mediterranean and, above all, Asia. [Karen] Masterson’s analysis of the havoc caused by the disease and of the research effort by federally funded scientists and clinicians makes a compelling read. Her book is brimming with colorful characters—some admirable, some less so.”

Masterson’s gripping tale unfolds seamlessly. • The Wall Street Journal

Karen M. Masterson is a former political reporter for the Washington Bureau of the Houston Chronicle who left newspapers to pursue her interests in microbiology. On a teaching fellowship at Johns Hopkins University, she stumbled upon the story in The Malaria Project while researching at the National Archives. In 2005, she won a Knight journalism fellowship to study malaria at the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta and in rural Tanzania. She has a Master’s of Journalism from the University of Maryland and an MA in science writing from Johns Hopkins University’s acclaimed Writing Seminars. She lives with her husband and twin daughters outside Washington, D. C.

Karen Masterson’s book is a fascinating read, a deep dive into the lively history of the U.S. government’s efforts to discover a wonder cure for malaria, the greatest scourge in human history. The section on how research into a cure for malaria led, almost accidentally, to a partially effective treatment for syphilis is a real-life page-turner. The careful descriptions of malaria research in the Nazi death camps versus U.S. programs using prisoners is a compelling tale in shades of dark gray. But the most important part of Masterson’s book is her conclusion: that the search for a miracle cure, while it has real value, is in the end less vital than the real answer, which is economic development. That is, to cure malaria, the answer is not a pill or a shot, but reasonable housing and sound land and water practices. As malaria (and, to a lesser extent, its more shocking distant cousin, ebola) continue to ravage the world, Masterson’s thoughtful book offers that lesson to all who want to address the problem.

Absolutely first rate. A fascinating medical drama involving dozens of complex, devoted, sometimes bristling personalities struggling to tame a disease that crippled whole societies and emasculated whole armies while the world was at war. Every setting, from prisons to jungle hospitals, university laboratories to battling government bureaucracies is brought vividly to life. I would compare the book to *Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*, Herman Wouk's encyclopedic novels of World War Two, in the author's ability to bring to life an incredible diversity of people and places under constant stress. The book opens the readers' eyes to a critical aspect of the war rarely acknowledged in typical histories -- the need to keep our forces healthy enough to fight in malaria-ridden settings -- yet it remains a page-turner throughout.

This is an extremely interesting book because it tells in great detail the early antimalarial campaigns from the 1920's to the end of WWII. The author found many stories in archives and personnel interviews with family members that have not been made available to the public until now. The stories of the development of antimalarial drugs using US prisoners and Hitler's antimalarial drug development programs is very interesting. The fact that more US soldiers were hospitalized for malaria than battle wounds is astounding. A lot of history concerning the impact of malaria on the movement of US troops from Brazil to Africa and in the South Pacific Islands is explained as never before. The book is well written and has many old photographs of the people mentioned.

This is a very important book. Anyone who is interested in world health or medical research would find this fascinating. I also enjoyed the history involved. I learned as much about WWI and WWII from this book as I did from any one of fifty others I have read. It tells an incredible story in a highly readable fashion.

This seemed more like a textbook than an actual book you would pick up at the library. Very interesting and highly recommend it to anyone who is into medicine or history. My only concern is that the author switches from science to history several times in one chapter that gets the reader very confused at times

Very well written. Detailed without bogging down the story. Author's knowledge of the subject was evident. Recommend for readers who enjoy science and history.

great

It was the best book I have read in a long time.

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