

**RFK, Jr. Responds to Daniel Pinchbeck:  
The Historical Role of Vaccines in Eliminating Infectious Disease Mortality**

After Pinchbeck writes that he has “not seen convincing evidence” to support arguments that societal improvements, not vaccines, played a significant role in the disappearance of childhood diseases, RFK, Jr. lays out the evidence in a letter to Pinchbeck.

By [Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.](#)



Daniel:

I don't want to seem unappreciative of the guarded praise you have twice thrown my way. I am aware that debasing me in media circles has become a means of career advancement and that any demonstration of approval invites career suicide. I've therefore become very familiar with the obligatory journalistic technique of prefacing any concessions to my viewpoint with some generalized besmirching of my overall accuracy and character.

I assume that this is the reason you begin both your articles ([Feb. 23, 2021](#) and [Dec. 10, 2020](#)) about me by disavowing me for refusing “to concede” the orthodoxy that “vaccines are considered some of the greatest successes of modern medicine,” and that vaccines miraculously eliminated mortalities from infectious disease in the twentieth century (from the [Feb. 23 article](#)):

“(Kennedy) proposed, instead, that other societal improvements like better sanitation were responsible for the disappearance of childhood diseases at that time, not vaccines. I have not seen convincing evidence supporting this.”

Because [Instagram has removed](#) our interview (do liberals even complain about censorship anymore?) I can't swear to the accuracy of my recollection, but, as I recall our conversation, I cited in support of my assertion, [Children's Health Defense's](#) exhaustive 2010 study, “Annual Summary of Vital Statistics: Trends in the Health of Americans during the 20th Century” ([Guyer et al, December 2000.](#)) published in *Pediatrics*. After extensively studying a century of recorded data, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Johns Hopkins researchers concluded: “Thus vaccinations does not account for the impressive declines in mortality from infectious diseases seen in the first half of the twentieth century.”



Similarly, in 1977, Boston University epidemiologists (and husband and wife) John and Sonja McKinlay published their [seminal work](#) in the Millbank Memorial Fund Quarterly on the role that vaccines (and other medical interventions) played in the massive 74% decline in mortality seen in the twentieth century: “The Questionable Contribution of Medical Measures to the Decline of Mortality in the United States in the Twentieth Century.”

In this article, which was formerly required reading in U.S. medical schools, the McKinlays pointed out that 92.3% of the mortality rate decline happened between 1900 and 1950, before most vaccines existed, and that all medical measures, including antibiotics and surgeries, “appear to have contributed little to the overall decline in mortality in the United States since about 1900 — having in many instances been introduced several decades after a marked decline had already set in and having no detectable influence in most instances.”

The McKinlays’ study concludes that vaccines (and all other medical interventions, including antibiotics and surgeries) were responsible for — at most — somewhere between 1% and 3.5% of that decline. Put differently, at least 96.5% of the decline (and likely more than that) occurred for the reasons I cited in my discussion with you.

Finally, The McKinlays presciently warned that profiteers among the medical establishments would try to assign credit for the mortality declines to vaccines and other interventions in order to justify [government mandates](#) for their medical interventions.

Seven years before the McKinlays’ publication, Harvard Medical School Dr. Dean [Edward H. Kass](#) delivered a landmark speech to the annual meeting of the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Kass was a founding member and first president of the organization, and founding editor of the Journal of Infectious Diseases.

On Oct. 19, 1970, Kass told his colleagues that the dramatic decline in infectious disease mortalities during the 20th century “is merely the most important happening in the history of the health of man.” He cautioned that:

“This decline in rates of certain disorders, correlated roughly with socioeconomic circumstances ... Yet we have only the vaguest and most general notions about how it happened and by what mechanisms socioeconomic improvement and decreased rates of certain diseases run in parallel ... we had accepted some half truths and had stopped searching for the whole truths. The principal half truths were that medical research had stamped out the great killers of the past — tuberculosis, diphtheria, pneumonia, puerperal sepsis, etc. — and that medical research and our superior system of medical care were major factors extending life expectancy, thus providing the American people with the highest level of health available in the world. That these are half truths is known but is perhaps not as well known as it should be.”

Daniel, despite the popularity of your assumption, I have not been able to find a published peer-reviewed study that suggests it has any basis beyond pharmaceutical industry propaganda, about which both Kass and the McKinlays so eloquently warned.

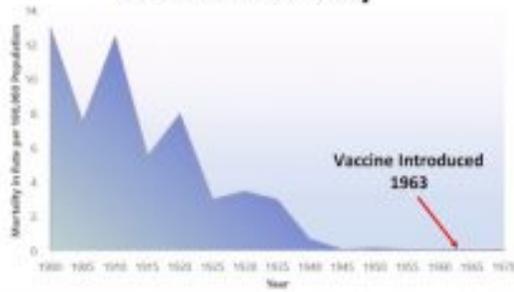
Giving credit to vaccination for the precipitous decline of disease mortalities therefore invokes [Rene Dubos’s observation](#) that:

“When the tide is receding from the beach it is easy to have the illusion that one can empty the ocean by removing the water with a pail.”

The graphs below show that mortalities for virtually all the great killer diseases, infectious and otherwise, declined along the same timelines inversely correlated with advances in nutrition and sanitation.

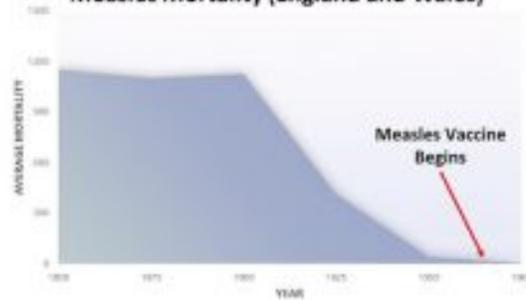
The science therefore suggests that credit should go not to the medical cartels, but rather to the engineers who brought us railroads and highways for transporting food, electric refrigerators, chlorinated water and sewage treatment plants, etc. Note the declines occurred in both infectious and noninfectious diseases, irrespective of the availability of vaccines.

## Measles Mortality



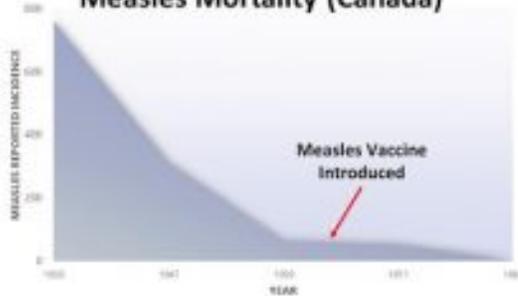
Source: Centers for Disease Control. Epidemiology and prevention of vaccine-preventable diseases, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. Hamborsky L, Kroger A, Wolfe S, ed. Washington D.C.: Public Health Foundation 2015. Appendix E3.

## Measles Mortality (England and Wales)



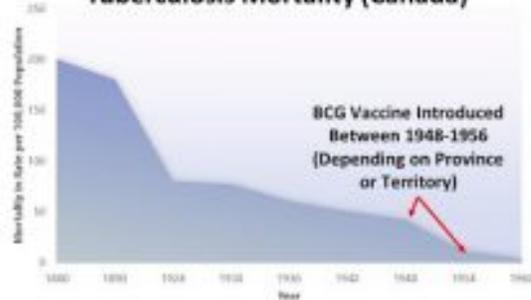
Source: McKewen, T., *The Role of Medicine: Dream, Mirage or Nemesis?*; Basil Blackwell: Oxford, UK; 1979; p. 205; & Waltkin, H., in *The Relevance of Social Science for Medicine*; Spring: 1<sup>st</sup> edition, Dec. 31, 1980

## Measles Mortality (Canada)



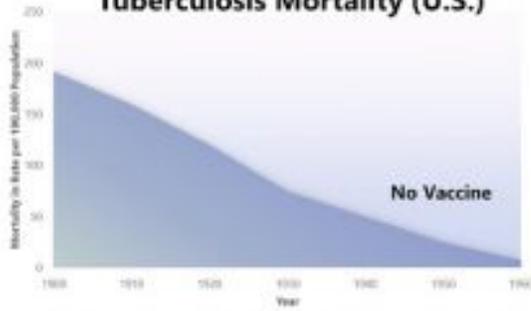
Source: Adapted from: Public Health Agency of Canada, Figure B - Measles Reported Incidence Canada, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pub/brat/vig/gc/p04-meas-rsq-eng.php>

## Tuberculosis Mortality (Canada)



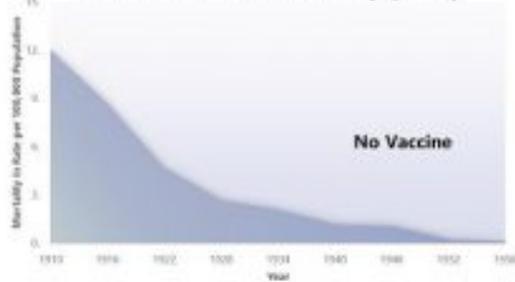
Source: Table based on data at: Timeline of TB in Canada <http://www.long.ca/tb/tbhistory/timeline>

### Tuberculosis Mortality (U.S.)



Source: John H. Oingle, Life and Death in Medicine, Scientific American, 1973 p. 56.

### Scarlet Fever Mortality (U.S.)



Source: Data derived from – Vital Statistics of the United States 1937-1960; and Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970 Part 1 Ch. 8 Vital Statistics and Health and Medical Care, pp. 44-86K.

### Influenza Mortality (U.S.)



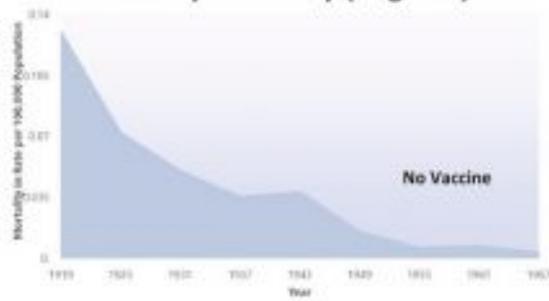
Source: Doehl, P., Trends in Recorded Influenza Mortality: United States 1900-2004, American Journal of Public Health, May 2005, vol. 95, no. 5, p. 541.

### Pertussis Mortality (U.S.)



Source: Data derived from: Vital Statistics of the United States 1937-1960; and Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970 Part 1 Ch. 8 Vital Statistics and Health and Medical Care, pp. 44-86K.

## Scurvy Mortality (England)



Source: Data for years 1919-1967. Mortality Statistics: Deaths Registered in England & Wales; UK Office for National Statistics, 1997.

**“Thus vaccination does not account for the impressive declines in mortality seen in the first half of the century.”**

**- CDC study, 2010**

Guyer et al. 2000 Pediatrics 106(6):1307