

Measles: Thank WHO, Big Pharma for Saving 20 Million Lives Since 2000



By Alex Berezow, PhD — November 11, 2016

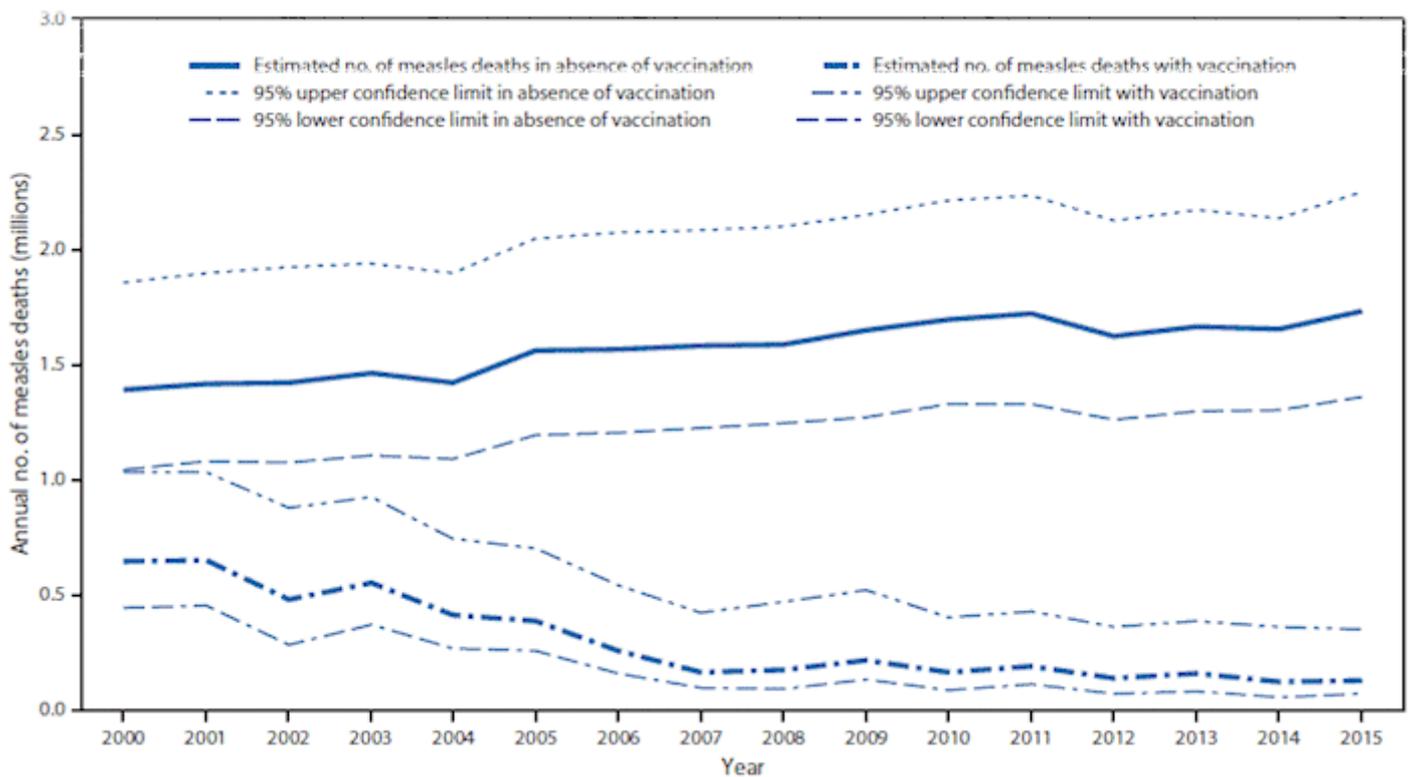


Credit: Shutterstock [1]

When a measles outbreak occurred at Disneyland roughly two years ago, anti-vaccine activists mocked it. They derided the infectious disease, caused by perhaps the most contagious human virus known, as "Mickey Mouse measles." Many claimed that measles is no big deal. As proof, they cited memories of getting measles as a child and recovering.

If only every person was so lucky. The [World Health Organization](#) [2] estimates that, in 2015, there were 134,200 deaths caused by measles, or 367 deaths every single day. In 1980, a staggering 2.6 million people died from measles. That is why measles really is a big deal; it's a highly infectious virus that is potentially deadly. And it is why global public health officials are doing everything they can to get the rest of the world vaccinated.

In its latest issue of the *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, the CDC estimates the impact that vaccination against measles has had in the world. The results are both encouraging and breathtaking.



The bolded line near the bottom of the chart shows how many people in the world died of measles in each year from 2000 to 2015. Despite the fact that we had a global public health campaign underway, approximately 651,600 people died of measles in 2000. But notice how that number has steadily declined to the current estimate of 134,200 people in 2015.

What would happen if there was no measles vaccine? That's what the upper bolded line depicts. As shown, the CDC estimates that roughly 1.5 million people would die of the disease every single year. That means, from 2000 to 2015, *vaccination has saved the lives of 20.3 million people from measles alone*. That is a truly breathtaking statistic.

Obviously, we have public health officials, such as the WHO, to thank. But thanks must also be given to pharmaceutical companies, such as Merck, without which we would not have mass-produced vaccines. This public health triumph represents the very best of government and the private sector working for the greater benefit of mankind. One day, like smallpox, measles will be relegated to the dustbin of history.

Source [3]: Patel MK, Gacic-Dobo M, Strebel PM, et al. "Progress Toward Regional Measles Elimination — Worldwide, 2000–2015." *MMWR* 65 (44): 1228–1233. Published: 11-Nov-2016. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6544a6> [4]

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[2] <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs286/en/>

[3] <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6544a6.htm>

[4] <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6544a6>