

Measles Vaccine Has Saved More than 20 Million Lives Globally Since 2000



By Alex Berezow, PhD — November 1, 2017

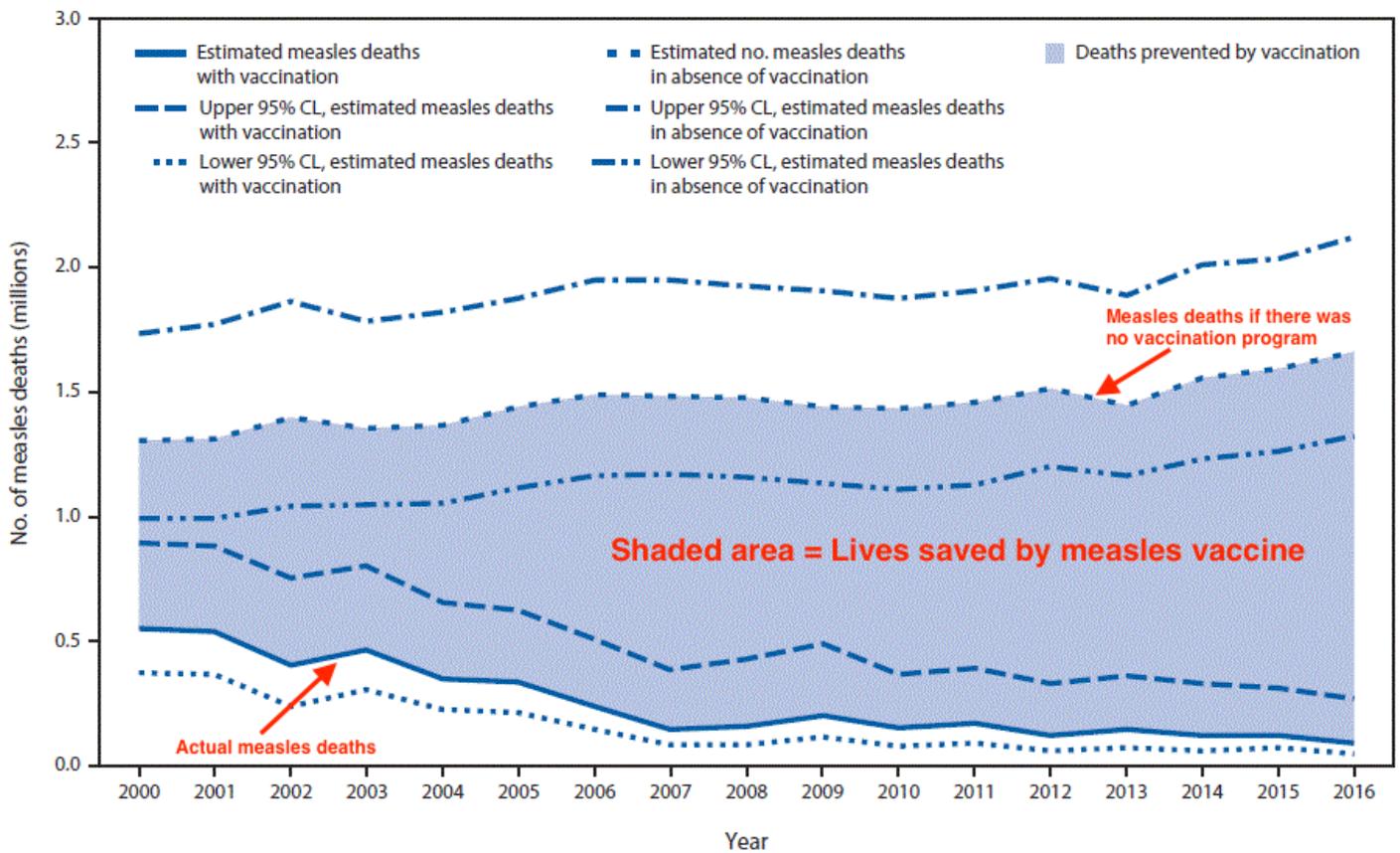


Credit: UKDFID/Wikipedia [1]

It's a shocking number. Last year, nearly 90,000 people around the world died from measles. This is the same disease that anti-vaxxers mocked as "Mickey Mouse measles" following the Disneyland outbreak, implying that the viral infection isn't serious.

But it is serious. Deadly serious. As recently as the year 2000, more than 500,000 people died from measles every single year. The reason for the dramatic decrease in deaths is because of a concerted global effort to eradicate the virus through vaccination. And it is clearly paying off.

To demonstrate the benefit of vaccination, the CDC calculated the number of deaths that are still occurring worldwide due to measles and the number of deaths that would have occurred had there been no global eradication program from 2000 to 2016. (The chart is rather difficult to read. There are only two important lines, indicated by arrows below. The other lines represent confidence intervals.)



In 2000, the actual number of measles deaths was about 550,000; had there been no vaccination effort, the death toll would have been about 1.3M. In 2016, the actual death toll was just under 90,000; had there been no vaccination program, the CDC estimates that 1.5M+ would have died.

Altogether, the CDC estimates that from 2000 to 2016, the measles vaccine saved 20.4 million lives.

Without a doubt, health officials -- especially those anonymous doctors and nurses who trek out in the field to remote and sometimes dangerous locations to administer vaccines -- are true public servants. And they prove that superheroes don't always wear capes; sometimes, they don white coats and carry hypodermic needles.

Source [2]: Dabbagh A, Patel MK, Dumolard L, et al. "Progress Toward Regional Measles Elimination — Worldwide, 2000–2016." *MMWR* 66 (42): 1148–1153. Published: 27-Oct-2017. DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6642a6.

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Links

[1]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Measles_vaccine#/media/File:Providing_vaccinations_to_protect_against_disease_after_T

[2] <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6642a6.htm>