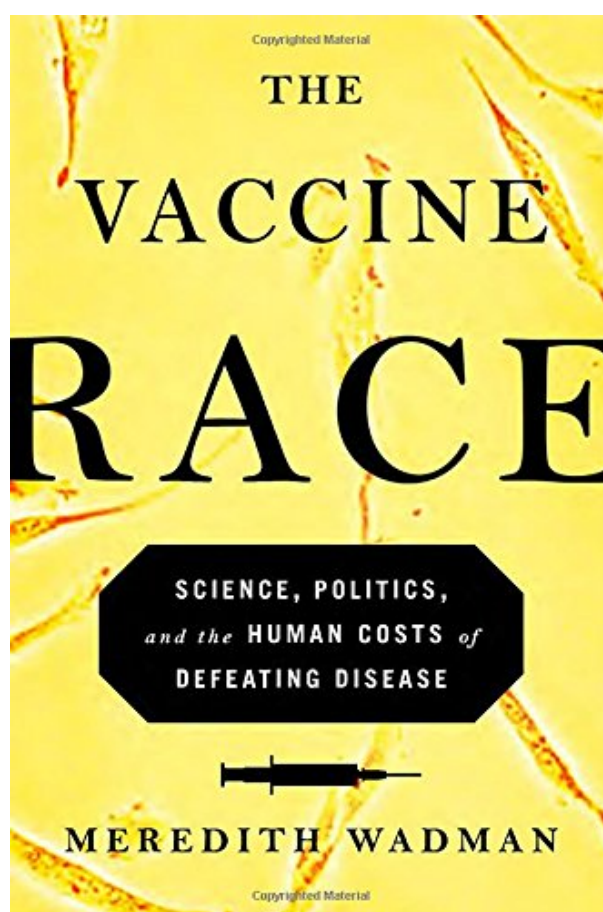
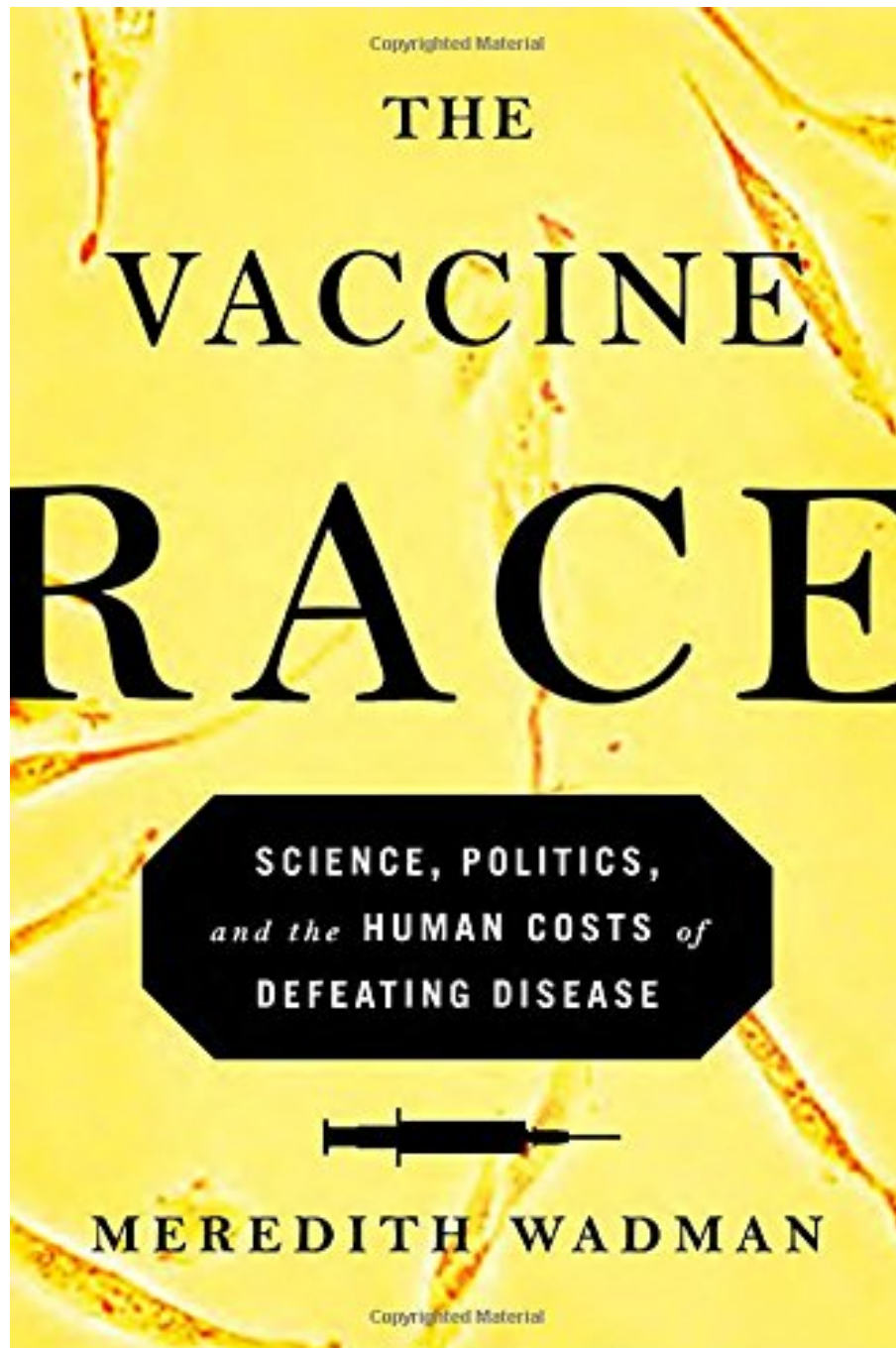


**THE VACCINE RACE: SCIENCE, POLITICS,
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The epic and controversial story of a major breakthrough in cell biology that led to the conquest of rubella and other devastating diseases.

Until the late 1960s, tens of thousands of American children suffered crippling birth defects if their mothers had been exposed to rubella, popularly known as German measles, while pregnant; there was no vaccine and little understanding of how the disease devastated fetuses. In June 1962, a young biologist in Philadelphia, using tissue extracted from an aborted fetus from Sweden, produced safe, clean cells that allowed the creation of vaccines against rubella and other common childhood diseases. Two years later, in the midst of a devastating German measles epidemic, his colleague developed the vaccine that would one day wipe out homegrown rubella. The rubella vaccine and others made with those fetal cells have protected more than 150 million people in the United States, the vast majority of them preschoolers. The new cells and the method of making them also led to vaccines that have protected billions of people around the world from polio, rabies, chicken pox, measles, hepatitis A, shingles and adenovirus.

Meredith Wadman's masterful account recovers not only the science of this urgent race, but also the political roadblocks that nearly stopped the scientists. She describes the terrible dilemmas of pregnant women exposed to German measles and recounts testing on infants, prisoners, orphans, and the intellectually disabled, which was common in the era. These events take place at the dawn of the battle over using human fetal tissue in research, during the arrival of big commerce in campus labs, and as huge changes take place in the laws and practices governing who “owns” research cells and the profits made from biological inventions. It is also the story of yet one more unrecognized woman whose cells have been used to save countless lives.

With another frightening virus imperiling pregnant women on the rise today, no medical story could have more human drama, impact, or urgency today than *The Vaccine Race*.

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By Enthusiast

Writers are ever attracted to the development of modern medicine and biochemistry. At the top of my list is the book "Cancer: the Emperor of all Maladies". Next could be "Science Fictions" and the life of Robert Gallo. Then might be the biography of Paul Berg at Stanford, and gene recombination. Now we have "The Vaccine Race", by Meredith Wadman. These tomes tend to present a challenge to the reader to accommodate the obscure language of Biochemistry. It is a relief that Wadman reads easily. We can accept the ability of viruses to grow in human fetal cells as a simple fact.

The life of a research scientist is a thread that runs through these books. After decades of research to the benefit of mankind, something happens to principle investigators. They become autocratic and difficult to work with. Worse, they break the law and the ethics of their profession. Their careers go up in smoke. The strain of cutting edge research and bureaucratic interference is too much to bear. We are humble before the limits of human ambition and endurance.

Wadman tells a good story, about the competition between pandemics and vaccines. It takes a few chapters to set her pace and then she takes off. If some chapters are too detailed, we can get the story from the first sentence in each paragraph.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

... the human diploid rabies vaccine I thought I would enjoy this book - I did not

By DL

As a scientist and recipient of the human diploid rabies vaccine I thought I would enjoy this book - I did not. It is annoyingly repetitive (to the point where I thought my kindle has a flash back). The author "speaks" with a variety of "voices" - sometimes she uses scientific terms with descriptions and definitions, sometimes she uses over the top adjectives to describe scientists, events, or particular patients, and sometimes she makes novice mistakes as "Plasma is another word for blood serum." Mistakes like that (made by a physician) make one wonder about the veracity of her other scientific descriptions. It is unclear why she insists on using the word "womb" when describing the uterus, unless she believes it has more "emotional" connotation. One could expose the political and competitive issues in the vaccine race without bias. She did not do so. She frequently claims the moral high ground, apparently unaware that our current ability to enlarge our moral circle is a direct result of the fact that in the US (for the most part) our basic needs have been met, we do not

suffer from mass epidemics that kill and paralyze, or maim or citizens, and we have disposable time and income. When read as a made for TV novel, rather than scientific history, it is an average, slightly cumbersome read. It could have been a great well written story - it was not

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

The Vaccine Race is a Readable Tale of Intrigue and Science

By Sarah Kellogg

The Vaccine Race is one of the most compelling books I've read in years. It is a book that delves deeply into the complex and troubling history of vaccine development in the United States, but it is more than just a science history. It also is a fascinating study of how some of the nation's brightest scientists, proving both altruistic and flawed, competed to find the next vaccine against ravaging diseases of the time. It is full of juicy details and thoughtful insights about the men and women who toiled away in laboratories to make sure kids could be protected and live long, healthful lives. The sections about Len Hayflick were especially intriguing to me, as they painted a portrait of a man fighting a Don Quixote-like battle to discover the hidden mysteries of the WI-38 cells. He is a flawed hero who owes his successes and failures to his own erratic decisions, and as a reader, I felt drawn into the web of his story and choices. I would recommend this book for anyone who loves absorbing writing and great storytelling.

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