

Selling Science

Polio and the Promise of Gamma Globulin

Stephen E. Mawdsley

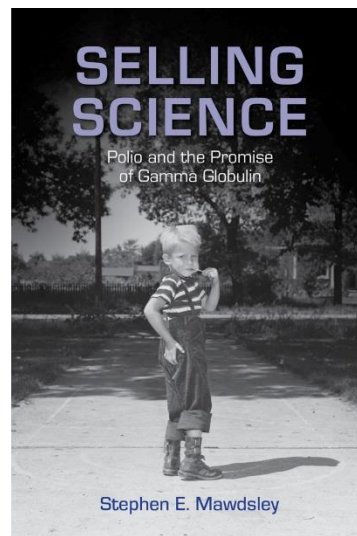
Today, when many parents seem reluctant to have their children vaccinated, even with long proven medications, the Salk vaccine trial, which enrolled millions of healthy children to test an unproven medical intervention, seems nothing short of astonishing. In *Selling Science*, medical historian Stephen E. Mawdsley recounts the untold story of the first large clinical trial to control polio using healthy children - 55,000 healthy children - revealing how this long-forgotten incident cleared the path for Salk's later trial.

- Describes how, in the early 1950s, Dr. William Hammon and the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis launched a pioneering medical experiment on a previously untried scale.
- The value of the proposed experiment was questioned by many prominent health professionals as it harbored potential health risks, but as Mawdsley points out, compromise and coercion moved it forward.
- Argues that although the trial returned dubious results, it was presented to the public as a triumph and used to justify a federally sanctioned mass immunization study on thousands of families between 1953 and 1954.
- Drawing on oral history interviews, medical journals, newspapers, meeting minutes, and private institutional records, *Selling Science* sheds light on the ethics of scientific conduct, and on the power of marketing to shape public opinion about medical experimentation.

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