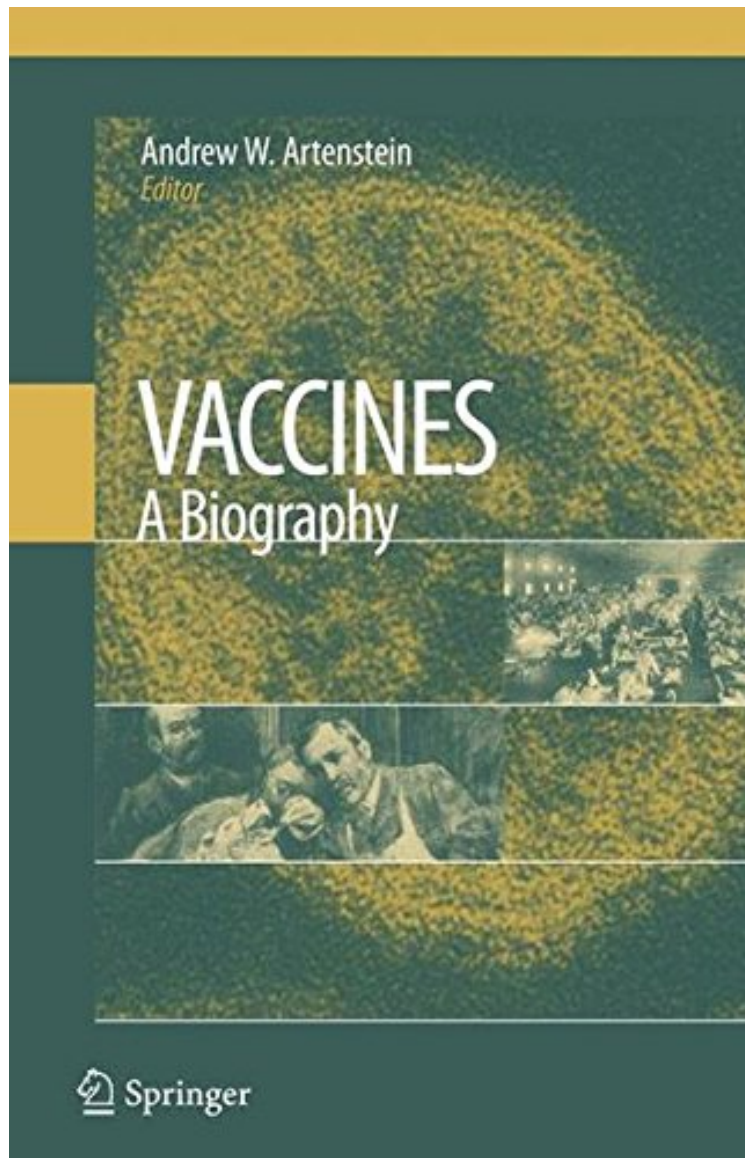


Vaccines: A Biography

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From Springer : Vaccines: A Biography before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Vaccines: A Biography:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Reads Like a NovelBy Margo KatzI have always been interested in the topic of vaccines and as a student of history, purchased Vaccines: A Biography, hoping that it would fulfill the promise in its Preface of "filling a void" by focusing on the "social, cultural, and scientific history of vaccines". I

wasn't looking for a technical manual or heavy basic science tome on vaccines but for a book with detailed accounts of how these lifesaving products came to be and with stories about the interesting people who came up with these ideas and pursued them. I was not disappointed. The book is wonderfully written, easy to read, and describes the science in the context of the time in which the work was occurring. It makes a fascinating read! The introductory chapter sets the tone by placing infectious diseases in their proper, broad historical context; the final chapter gives a brief but useful glimpse into what the future of vaccines may hold. In between, the book deals with the history of vaccines against individual infectious diseases, anchored by two chapters that divide the history into its early era and the "golden age" of vaccines. Even though the chapters are written by different authors (although the Editor wrote multiple), the book flows with one voice, and the style is consistent, which makes the reading easy. I read it cover-to-cover, but it is clear that one could read individual chapters and still come away with a good understanding of the topic. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in history, science, medicine, public health, or any combination of these. I learned a tremendous amount about not only vaccines and scientists, but about the social context in which they worked and the challenges they faced. I can't wait to see what the next book will be by this author.

Why another book about vaccines? There are already a few extremely well-written medical textbooks that provide comprehensive, state-of-the-art technical reviews regarding vaccine science. Additionally, in the past decade alone, a number of engrossing, provocative books have been published on various related issues ranging from vaccines against specific diseases to vaccine safety and policy. Yet there remains a significant gap in the literature the history of vaccines. *Vaccines: A Biography* seeks to fill a void in the extant literature by focusing on the history of vaccines and in so doing, recounts the social, cultural, and scientific history of vaccines; it places them within their natural, historical context. The book traces the lineage the biography of individual vaccines, originating with deeply rooted medical problems and evolving to an eventual conclusion. Nonetheless, these are not biographies in the traditional sense; they do not trace an individual's growth and development. Instead, they follow an idea as it is conceived and developed, through the contributions of many. These are epic stories of discovery, of risk-takers, of individuals advancing medical science, in the words of the famous physical scientist Isaac Newton, by standing on the shoulders of giants. One grant reviewer described the book's concept as triumphalist; although meant as an indictment, this is only partially inaccurate.

From the Back Cover Recounting the social, cultural, and scientific history of vaccines, *Vaccines: A Biography* traces the lineage the biography of individual vaccines, originating with deeply rooted medical problems, following ideas as they are conceived and developed, leading eventually to practical, preventive solutions to major public health problems in society. Yet these are not biographies in the traditional sense; they do not trace an individual's growth and development. These are epic stories of discovery, of risk-takers. They have all the trappings of fiction: strong protagonists who succeed against sometimes great odds, interpersonal conflicts, deceit, political intrigue, ethical dilemmas, and dramatic, if not staged events. They are set in the major centers of Europe and the United States, on farms and in slums, and in exotic venues from Calcutta to French Indochina to Cairo to Panama. They occur in the halls of academia, research laboratories, the chambers of government, and on the battlefields of war. At its core, *Vaccine: A Biography* is the history of individuals advancing medical science, in the words of the famous physical scientist Isaac Newton, "by standing on the shoulders of giants".