

# Clark Patriot

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VOL. 70 NO. 31

CLARK, NEW JERSEY, THURSDAY, JULY 31, 1986

USPS 115-760

20 CENTS

## Merck's hepatitis vaccine gets FDA approval



TECHNICIAN AT WORK... A technician draws a sample from a large processing vessel during the manufacture of Recombivax HB<sup>®</sup> at Merck Sharp & Dohme in West Point, Pa.

Recombivax HB<sup>®</sup> became the first vaccine for human use developed from genetic engineering technology to be licensed by the United States Food and Drug Administration, according to the Merck Sharp & Dohme Research Laboratories (MSDR), the vaccine's developer.

The new vaccine is for the prevention of hepatitis B, a serious viral infection of the liver that has caused nearly one million cases of chronic liver disease in the U.S. and approximately 200 million cases worldwide.

"Merck has long stood at the forefront of vaccine research and development. This new form of hepatitis B vaccine reaffirms our commitment to the development of future vaccines for improving human health," said P. Roy Vagelos, M.D., chairman and chief executive officer of Merck & Co., Inc.

Recombivax HB is made by recombinant DNA technology with the vaccine antigen the substance that stimulates immunity produced by a genetically engineered form of baker's yeast. A separate Merck vaccine, Hepatavac B<sup>®</sup>, derived from antigen extracted from human blood plasma, has been in wide

use in the United States and many other countries since 1981.

According to Robert Gersely, M.D., director of Virus and Cell Biology for scientific foresight of my predecessors in the Merck laboratories, who set out some eight years ago to circumvent dependence on human plasma, a potential by limited raw material, a source of the hepatitis B vaccine antigen.

"In addition, this achievement is an outstanding example of the benefits that can flow from collaborative efforts between industrial and academic scientists," he added. "Development of baker's yeast as an alternate source of the vaccine antigen began with a research agreement between Merck and university-based investigators in the area of recombinant technology."

Scientists associated with the Chiron Corporation developed, under a contract from Merck, the antigen source material Merck used in its eight year program to develop the vaccine.

In clinical studies, Recombivax HB has been shown to induce protective levels of antibodies against hepatitis B virus infection in more than 90 percent of healthy individuals who received the required three dose regimen. Response to the vaccine was dependent on the age of vaccinees; 100 percent of 73 children one to ten years of age developed antibodies while seroconversion rates ranged from 95 to 99 percent for 453 adults between the ages of 20 and 39, and 91 percent for 36 vaccinees 40 years of age and older.

The protective efficacy of the vaccine has been demonstrated in new born children of mothers who are chronically infected with the hepatitis B virus. The infants received a single dose of hepatitis B immune globulin at birth, followed by the recommended three doses of the new vaccine. Efficiency in preventing chronic hepatitis B infection was 94 percent among 93 infants studied at six months and 93 percent among 57 infants studied for nine months.

Among 1,252 healthy adults who were administered the new vaccine and then monitored for five days after each dose, the most frequent complaints were local reactions at the injection site, including soreness, itching, and swelling.

Other reactions with an incidence equal to or greater than 1 percent included fatigue, headache, fever, malaise, nausea, diarrhea, pharyngitis and upper respiratory infection.

Persons in whom symptoms of mild infection may be mild or totally absent may become hepatitis B carriers who constantly expose their families and close associates to the hazard of infection. Carriers also are at increased risk of subsequently developing chronic liver disease which may lead to death from cirrhosis or primary liver cancer.

Each year an estimated 200,000 new infections occur in the U.S. Of these, more than 50,000 develop clear symptoms of infection, such as jaundice (yellowing of the skin), 10,000 to 20,000 become chronically infected; 10,000



FIRST GENETICALLY ENGINEERED VACCINE... A Merck scientist draws a sample from a small formulation unit used in the development of the Recombivax HB<sup>®</sup>, the first genetically engineered vaccine for human use in the U.S.

are hospitalized with the disease, and an average of 250 of them will die of severe infection.

Persons in whom symptoms of mild infection may be mild or totally absent may become hepatitis B carriers who constantly expose their families and close associates to the hazard of infection. Carriers also are at increased risk of subsequently developing chronic liver disease which may lead to death from cirrhosis or primary liver cancer.

Worldwide, some 200 million people of approximately 5 percent of the world's population are hepatitis B carriers, but the prevalence is much higher in Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where between 6 and 10 percent of the population are carriers. In the United States, between 700,000 and one million persons are carriers of the virus.



INTREPID MUSEUM SALUTES NEW JERSEY... New Jersey Attorney General W. Conroy Edwards, (right) is soon presenting Intrepid Museum Foundation Chairman Znachary Fislar with a proclamation from Governor Thomas H. Kean in honor of "New Jersey Month" aboard the Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum in Manhattan. The aircraft carrier turned museum, "Intrepid Hill" was rededicated "Halsey Hill" in honor of the late Admiral William F. Halsey, the famous New Jerseyan who commanded the Pacific's Third Fleet during World War II. A photo of Halsey is shown center.



UNION COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HONOR OLGA SACHENSKI... Michael Espella, Union County Freeholder, presented a resolution recently on behalf of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, to Olga Sachenski, who retired as Secretary to the Building Inspector and Engineer for the Township of Clark. A Clark resident for 20 years, Sachenski worked for the Township of Clark for over 24 years. She also served as a member of Union Council No. 8, New Jersey Civil Service Association (NJCSA), for 20 years, and has served as Local President and State President of the NJCSA. Olga and her husband, Peter, have a son, Bruce.

## To All Township of Clark residents Attention! Attention!

The Clark Volunteer Fire Department urges all Clark residents to take a moment to read this article. It could save your life in the event of a fire in your home.

The Clark Volunteer Fire Department is running a program to register all the people in the Township of Clark with any medical problem that would limit mobility of any person in an emergency.

This would pertain to any person with a medical history of limited mobility, severe speech impediments, the bed ridden, people attached to life support machinery, or those otherwise unable to help themselves in an emergency.

The Clark Volunteer Fire Department requests all information will be held in the strictest confidence.

Simply fill in the coupon below and a fire prevention inspector will contact you personally to verify the information needed and to assist you in making your home fire safe.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE NUMBER DAY: \_\_\_\_\_ EVENING PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
THE TIME YOU CAN BE REACHED: \_\_\_\_\_

Clark Volunteer Fire Dept.  
Department D  
Municipal Building  
Westfield Ave.  
Clark, N.J. 07066

If there are any questions, call 381-1158 and a fire inspector will contact you.

## "Annie" to open at Brearley School

The summer musical theatre of the Union County Regional High School District will present "Annie" at the David Brearley Regional High School, Kenilworth at 8 p.m., August 1 and 2. The production, under the direction of Angelo Corbo and Jim Avidon, features students and adults from Berkeley Heights, Clark, Garwood, Kenilworth, Mountainside and Springfield. Tickets are \$5 and may be purchased at the door.

Henry Altman of Clark has a feature role in this production.

## Tracy Albrecht receives RPI Medal

Tracy A. Albrecht of 118 Tudor Dr., Clark, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Albrecht, has received the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Medal. Each year RPI presents the medal to high school students for outstanding achievements in the study of mathematics and science.

## Fire Department seeks new members

The Clark Volunteer Fire Department is accepting applications for new members on Monday.

Any township resident interested can obtain an application any Thursday evening between 7 and 9 p.m., on any Sunday morning between 9 and 12 at Fire Headquarters located on Broadway.

Requirements: Good driving record, between 18 and 30 years of age and reside in the Township of Clark.

## Clarkites honored for volunteer work

Frank and Mary Matloz of Clark were among 180 men and women honored for a combined contribution of 210,423 hours in service at the East Orange VA Medical Center at the annual Volunteer Award ceremony.



GAIL GIACOBBE HONORED... NJNET/Thirteen recently honored several tri-state area teachers with the 1986 Tolly 13 award. The award was presented to teachers who utilized television cameras in their classrooms. Arnold Tolly, chairman of Thirteen's Curriculum Utilization Committee and Assistant Superintendent for Dover Public Schools in New Jersey, presents a Tolly 13 Award to Gail Giacobbe of Arthur L. Johnson Regional High School in Clark, Mo. Giacobbe utilized the public television system "Tolly 13" in her 10th grade French class. The program taught students not only to become proficient in French but how to produce and direct a television news show.