

Medical Breakthroughs Do Not Depend on the Federal Government

Because the NIH is the largest biomedical research institution in the world, many Americans believe that all medical progress requires NIH funding. Wrong. American ingenuity has never been dependent on government support.

In fact, throughout our nation's history, several significant medical breakthroughs were made in the absence of federal funding. Here is a short list of some of those successes:

- In the 1940's, O. T. Avery, while working at the privately funded Rockefeller Institute, discovered that DNA was "the molecule of inheritance," the means by which genetic information was passed from generation to generation.
- The Rockefeller Foundation also provided most of the funding to bring penicillin from the laboratories in England to the market. Within only two years of funding by the Rockefeller foundation, Merck began manufacturing penicillin for distribution in the U.S. and Great Britain.
- In 1987, Eli Lilly introduced Prozac, an antidepressant that has helped millions of Americans combat depression. Eli Lilly researcher Ray Fuller developed Prozac in the search for a compound that would control depression by altering serotonin levels. In 2002, 40 million patients in over 90 countries were using Prozac.
- In the 1950's, Stuart Adams, a scientist working at the Boots Company in Britain screened over 600 new organic acids looking for anti-inflammatory drugs that would control pain, particularly among sufferers of rheumatoid arthritis. The safety and efficacy of ibuprofen has resulted in its being sold over the counter to millions world wide under the brand names Advil, Motrin and Nuprin.
- The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis provided medical care for any needy polio patient and in the early 1950's spent "ten times as much on polio research as the tax-supported National Institutes of Health," which led to the development of a polio vaccine.
- In the 1970's, the American Cancer society funded the pioneering work of Judah Folkman who demonstrated that tumors could be fought by cutting their blood supply. This research has led to the development of more than 20 drugs that are being tested for their ability to fight cancer. Judah Folkman's initial results were obtained without the help of federal support.
- In the 1880's Dr. Joseph McFarland developed a diphtheria anti-toxin with funds from a small business in Philadelphia called H.K. Mulford Company.

(Source: "The Free Market of Scientific Research," by Aaron Steelman in *The Freeman* May 1998, Vol. 48, No. 5; The American Cancer Society) <http://www.thefreemanonline.org/featured/the-free-market-and-scientific-research/>

