

WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

EXPERT COMMITTEE ON SMALLPOX

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ORGANISATION MONDIALE
DE LA SANTÉ

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CRITERION FOR SMALLPOX ERADICATION

by

WHO Secretariat

A statement on a criterion for smallpox eradication was prepared by the Secretariat after taking into consideration opinions expressed at the African Smallpox Conference in 1959 and the Inter-Regional Smallpox Conference held in New Delhi in 1960, and after detailed discussions with the Secretariat of the American Regional Office. The Director-General presented this statement as part of his report on smallpox eradication to the Fifteenth World Health Assembly. The statement reads as follows:

"From a practical viewpoint, countries in which smallpox has recently been persistently present may consider the disease to be eradicated when no cases of smallpox occur during the three years following the end of a satisfactory vaccination programme. Although special conditions in individual countries may result in changes in the manner of conducting vaccination programmes, smallpox is generally held to disappear if the successful vaccination of at least 80 per cent. of each population group in a country is achieved within five years from the commencement of the campaign.

Countries which have eradicated smallpox should adopt measures to maintain such eradication, either by means of establishing in their Health Services a permanent immunization programme, or by the combined application of isolation and immunization measures in the event of the disease being reintroduced. It is essential that countries exposed to a high risk of the introduction of smallpox - for example when the disease is regularly present in contiguous countries - should maintain an adequate degree of immunity in the population by means of vaccination of new members of the population (new-born infants and immigrants), and by the periodic revaccination of (a) the school-age groups (up to 15 years of age), and (b) adults, especially those in areas where reintroductions are most likely to occur, and those persons who by their occupation are in frequent contact with international travellers. In view of the increasing volume of international traffic, and until such time as global eradication is achieved, the strict application of the International Sanitary Regulations is called for as the safeguard against the reintroduction of smallpox to countries where hitherto it was absent."