

U.S. Saved 135,000 Lives, \$810 Billion Using Polio Vaccines

By Vivek Shankar

Jan. 23 (Bloomberg) – The U.S. in the past 50 years saved about 135,000 lives and \$810 billion in health-care costs by using polio vaccines, a study found.

An additional 25,000 lives will be saved by 2015, said lead author Kim Thompson, an associate professor at the Harvard School of Public Health, in an e-mail yesterday. By 2015, health-care savings will top \$1 trillion, she said.

The U.S. spent about \$35 billion on polio treatments between 1955 and 2005, an investment that has helped eradicate the disease in the country. Polio still afflicts 2,000 people every year – most of them in Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan, according to the United Nations.

The findings “should help people understand and better appreciate the huge economic savings that can come from investments in public-health interventions”, Thompson said in a statement distributed by Newswise on Jan. 19.

Over the next 10 years, the U.S. will spend \$6.3 billion on polio vaccinations.

The UN's World Health Organization says global polio eradication efforts are short of funds by \$575 million for fiscal 2008. Polio, caused by a virus, most commonly affects children under age three and can cause total paralysis.

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