

Speech of Professor
R. Palmer Beasley
Co-Winner of King Faisal International Prize
For Medicine 1984/1404H
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Your Majesty,
Member of Saudi Royal Family,

It is my pleasure to be in Riyadh, and Honour to accept the 1985 King Faisal International Prize in Medicine. I am especially honoured to share it with Dr. Mario Rizzetto for I have long admired his research on the Delta Virus and magnificent contribution he has made to the better understanding of liver disease. For those of you here tonight who may not be familiar with the details of the work for which each awardee is being honoured. I would like to take a brief moment to summarize Dr. Rizzetto's achievement. In a word, he found a new virus and did the research that shows the serious damage in causes. Not only did he find a new virus, but a new kind of virus, which only infects people already by the hepatitis B virus, another very special and unusual virus because it is the first human virus known to cause liver cancer, for

which my own research is being honoured here this evening.

I like your combination of awards for Dr. Rizzetto and myself because we have been working at opposite ends of spectrum of the same problem, hepatitis. This disease is one of the most important the world. There are more than 200 million chronic hepatitis B carriers in the world. And as many of 40% of them will die early death from liver cancer or cirrhosis caused by their chronic infections with this virus. Liver cancer is one of the world's commonest malignancies and most cases were caused by long term hepatitis B infections most often transmitted from their own carrier mothers, when they were born.

Saudi Arabia has about 2% hepatitis B carriers, approximately 10 to 20 times common more than in the United States or most of Western Europe. Much, however, about hepatitis B in Saudi Arabia is still unknown including the frequency of delta virus infections. Much more research on hepatitis is needed in Saudi Arabia.

I would like to speak about immunization against hepatitis because most infections are preventable. Most cases can now be prevented, just like smallpox, polio, tetanus or measles. The vaccine that now exists is exceptionally good, perhaps the best vaccine ever developed because it can prevent liver cancer as well as hepatitis. This great hope is the reason that the World Health Organisation has recently launched a worldwide program for the control of liver cancer by immunization. Your people need it, and I recommend it.

I am enormously impressed with the development I see in your Kingdom.

The impressive physical development is present everywhere I look, but I know that the development extends too many other things less obvious to the eye such as education and health of the Saudi People. I would like to make three simple recommendations:

1- Continue and strengthen your programs of education, for in the long run as educated people will be the most important resource you can ever have.

2- Do more to promote public health for preventive medicine will do the most for your people at the least cost.

3- Encourage research for progress can only be achieved when there is new knowledge.

I will end this simple address with a prayer for peace and your help to do everything in your power to make it possible for this troubled world. I would like to take this opportunity to make one last suggestion, the establishment of a King Faisal International Peace Prize. I believe that such a prize could have great influence on world peace.

I thank you again and you're family, and close with these simple words of

Thanks.