

Speech of Professor  
**John Louis Gerin**

Co-Winner of King Faisal International Prize  
For Medicine 1998/1418H.

Saturday 14.2.1998 (17.10.1418A.H.)

Your Royal Highness Prince Sultan Ibn Abdul Aziz  
Second Deputy Premier, Minister of Defense and Aviation  
And Inspector General  
Your Royal Highnesses,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,

I am deeply honoured by the award of the 1998 King Faisal International Prize for Medicine. It is especially satisfying because the King Faisal Prize is widely known to recognize individual excellence in a selected field of human endeavor, in this case, the control of communicable diseases. The philosophy of the King Faisal Foundation to reward contributions to mankind is especially consistent with the control of infectious diseases since such maladies know no geographic, social, or economic boundaries. I am especially pleased to share this award with my long-time friend and valued colleague, Dr. Robert Purcell. Our collaborations demonstrate the power of bringing together somewhat different scientific backgrounds to achieve medical progress against common enemies, viral diseases that have plagued mankind for all recorded history. We stand on the shoulders of those who went

before us and accept the Prize on behalf of these and our many colleagues and associates, dedicated scientists from diverse geographic regions, who toiled with us and dedicated their special intellects and energies to the common goal.

As I stand before you, I am highly optimistic of our abilities to achieve public health control of viral hepatitis. Those that we have known the longest, hepatitis A and hepatitis B, are already yielding to our efforts and the others will follow. As long as we can maintain our focus and commit our energies and resources as a people; medical research will provide the tools and our responsible health governance will provide the essential delivery to peoples in need wherever that happens to be.

One of the most valiant public health efforts is the Childhood Vaccination Initiative and the World Health Organization's Expanded Program of Immunization of which delivery of hepatitis B vaccine is a part. It is estimated that full deployment of hepatitis B virus vaccine alone will save 800,000 human lives. All national authorities, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, that have adopted these programmes are to be congratulated for their enlightened policy. Indeed, it represents the very essence of the King Faisal Foundation's philosophy, namely, the unreserved commitment to the welfare of mankind.

On behalf of my family and my many colleagues, I again thank you for this great, great honour.