

Remarks at the Swearing-in Ceremony for Bernadine Healy as
Director of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland
June 24, 1991

It is nice to be back here at NIH on this beautiful day. And may I salute Dr. Sullivan, a former researcher and NIH grant recipient. And let me salute, Lou, what a magnificent job you're doing as Secretary of HHS. It isn't easy, and he's doing a first-class job.

And over my right shoulder, Connie Horner, the Deputy Secretary of HHS. And Dr. Mason, Assistant Secretary of HHS for Health, a great member of this team. Dr. Healy, who we're out here to honor and salute, whose career shows what scientist Lewis Thomas meant when he talked of the capacity to do something unique, imaginative, useful, and altogether right. I also would like to single out Dr. Broder, the head of the Cancer Institute; my friend Dr. Tony Fauci, the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. I think Congressman Early is with us. Congresswoman Morella was to be. I haven't spotted her out there—there she is, right here in the front row. [Laughter] Art Modell and so many others. Ladies and gentlemen.

Before we get into what I assure you will be mercifully brief remarks, I do want to single out two people that came out here with me from the White House—one, my own doctor, Burt Lee, who came to me and us from Memorial Sloan-Kettering in New York and who is doing a superb job. And he keeps telling me and reminding me of the fantastic asset that this country has in NIH. Burt Lee over here—Burt, stand up so they can see you. And with him Dr. Allan Bromley, who is the head of our scientists. He's the top scientist at the White House. Doesn't have much challenge for that job, I might add—[laughter]—but nevertheless, it's through him that I first saw Bernadine Healy in action. And he's doing a superb job in many aspects of science. Allan, would you please stand up.

And let me just say that I'm delighted to be with members of the National Institutes of Health family on this very special

day.

In becoming Director of NIH, Dr. Healy not only joins a long and noble tradition, she assumes a post from which she can help us build a better, healthier, more prosperous America.

Let's consider results that the NIH has already achieved: growing in 104 years from a one-room laboratory on Staten Island to an organization with 13 institutes, 4 centers, and the National Library of Medicine.

Before the turn of the century, the "microbe hunters" who founded the NIH risked their lives to fight cholera and yellow fever. And then in the fifties, Director James Shannon urged the Nation to spend money on research as well as on iron lungs to defeat the scourge of polio.

NIH-supported research has led to some of the most important biomedical advances of the past century in heart disease, cancer, and other disorders. And now we must build on these beginnings. And that's why we have requested that the NIH's funding for fiscal '92 be increased to almost \$9 billion, the largest increase ever requested by any President. And we want to help you lead us toward a new age of biotechnology.

Already, NIH-supported researchers have developed many of the tools used in biotechnology. They've created training and education programs to enlarge the pool of talented researchers. And here at NIH you know that education makes great futures possible. Inspired scholarship has produced procedures and products that enable us to live longer, more creative lives. And your labors will enrich the next American century.

We know that biomedical research is a key to transforming the practice of medicine. Today, for example, NIH supports work on new drugs that can limit the damage from heart attacks, on techniques for identifying hidden injuries by means of painless computerized images of the body, on medicines to save victims of accidents from permanent spinal cord injury.

These NIH initiatives reflect our commitment to biomedical innovation. Our Council on Competitiveness is developing recommendations for streamlining the drug approval process, cutting regulations redtape so that healing drugs get to those who need them. We're working to ensure that government-sponsored research and private research will move more quickly into the marketplace.

I am proud of our commitment to cures that not even Ripley would believe. Scientists have begun learning how to read the human genome, building a body of knowledge that will be forever useful. Researchers throughout our country work day and night to create vaccines and other measures that prevent disease before it strikes. These advances show, as Emerson said, how "in the hands of the discoverer, medicine becomes a heroic art."

Still, heroism starts in the human heart. Each American bears responsibility for doing whatever he or she can do to live a long and healthy life. We know that we can keep people healthier by preventing disease rather than by waiting to deal with disease or illness after it sets in.

Americans need to drink less, smoke less, and exercise more. And they need to take preventive measures, such as getting immunized early and regularly, to ensure future health. Unwise decisions by the individual can undo the wisest government policy. And, yes, we should and will commit government to further scientific and biomedical advancement. But remember, without the individual our nation cannot accomplish its goals. With the individual bent on reducing risk factors, we can make America not only the world's wealthiest nation but its healthiest nation, too.

And in that spirit, I want to take this chance to praise a national campaign that our administration has begun against infant mortality. We know that good health requires the best possible start in life, and so we've launched the Healthy Start program, a pilot project that will bring early prenatal care to thousands of low-income mothers while helping to identify which government programs work best. We're also improving the health system of all women by focusing on cancer, heart disease,

osteoporosis, and other problems.

I know this is a very special interest of Dr. Healy's. And let me also say how pleased I am that Dr. Healy has also begun a major initiative for health by developing a strategic plan for NIH.

And last week, Secretary Sullivan announced a reorganization plan that would bring three more institutes to the NIH: The National Institutes for Mental Health, Drug Abuse, and Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. This plan will make it easier to find ways to treat drug and alcohol abuse and to cure mental illness.

We want to expand drug and alcohol treatment research, allowing the NIH to help eliminate the tragic health consequences of unwise personal behavior. We've proposed an aggressive program of prevention initiatives for infants, for children, for adults, and for the elderly. Such initiatives will promote a healthier America and may help keep costs from spiraling further.

I challenge the biomedical and behavioral research community to join this crusade. After all, we're talking, literally, about the life of a nation. We're talking about our future and our children's future.

Let me close with a story that typifies the dedication of NIH researchers and staff, whom I salute today. It concerns a woman who came up to the world-famous violinist Fritz Kreisler after he just finished a concert. She said, "I'd give my life to play as beautifully as you did." And Kreisler replied, "My dear madam, I did."

Lives of dedication are exemplified here at NIH. Buildings full of unsung heroes. Health care workers, grants administrators, animal caretakers, laboratory technicians, support staff, and the new Director—all of you commit your professional lives to the public and to the future.

The 12th century physician-philosopher Maimonides spoke of medical practice inspired with soul and filled with understanding. Dr. Healy, you bring to this office the inspiration, the soul, and the understanding necessary for building upon NIH's already sterling legacy. May God bless you and our wonderful country, the United States of America.

And now, it is my honor to witness the

formal swearing-in of Dr. Bernadine Healy as the Director of the National Institutes of Health. Thank you all very, very much.

Note: The President spoke at 9:46 a.m. in the Jack Masur Auditorium in the Clinical Center on the campus of the National Institutes of Health. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis W. Sullivan; Constance Horner and James O. Mason, HHS Deputy Secretary and

Assistant Secretary for Health; Samuel Broder, Director of the National Cancer Institute; Anthony S. Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases; Representatives Joseph D. Early and Constance A. Morella; Art Modell, owner of the Cleveland Browns football team; Burton J. Lee III, Physician to the President; and D. Allan Bromley, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees June 24, 1991

Refugee assistance

Q. Nice to see you.

The President. Very nice to see you all. Just delighted. We had a wonderful weekend, and we're so pleased to see Mrs. Ogata here because we're going to talk about some very important refugee matters. The High Commissioner's Office is doing a superb job, and we've got some big problems out there.

High Commissioner Ogata. We do have two large issue areas. One is, of course, in Iraq and in the Persian Gulf area. And the other is now in the Horn of Africa—

The President. Oh yes.

High Commissioner Ogata. —which is just as large in terms of the scope of the refugees involved as well as the seriousness. And we require a great deal of international support and mobilization of resources.

The President. Well, we certainly want to do our part on that.

High Commissioner Ogata. You have been doing a great deal. And I came primarily to thank you very much and also to ask you for continued support.

The President. Well, as these problems develop, the United States—

High Commissioner Ogata. You have always taken the lead, yes.

The President. —will have to do it. We have to do that.

Thank you all very much.

Measles Vaccine Funding

Q. Mr. President, have you postponed the funding of the measles vaccine for another year?

The President. I don't know what that story was about. If it's done, it hasn't been called to my attention. And I'll have to discuss it with—

Q. It was a low-level set of recommendations that have worked themselves up to—

The President. I wondered where that story came from, because there was certainly no decision—

Q. Because after extravaganza last week on—

The President. Yes, exactly. They're trying to act like we're turning our back. I'm surprised people would write it without confirming it, saying I had done something. It was a little annoying, but we'll have to look at it. I can't understand how anybody would write something and attributing it to what the President had done without doing as you're doing, verifying it. So, I appreciate your thoroughness here, giving us a chance to set the record straight.

Q. There's a few other questions we have, too.

The President. Good to see you.