

# Israeli WMD Institute Used Soldiers as Guinea Pigs in Untested Anthrax Experiment

By [Richard Silverstein](#)

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[Tikun Olam](#)

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A six year struggle by a group of IDF soldiers and officers for justice has ended with the State [agreeing to pay them \\$6-million](#) (Yossi Melman's [Hebrew story](#) and the [English version](#), which has been replaced on the Jerusalem Post site by a [far more IDF-friendly story](#) by Yaakov Lapin) for their participation in a medical experiment conducted under false pretenses. Between 1999-2005, the ministry of defense, IDF, and the [Israeli chemical and biological weapons institute](#) at Nes Ziona collaborated with their American counterparts in research to find a suitable anthrax vaccine. This was the period just after the U.S. "white powder" letter scare in which several Americans were infected with anthrax and died. There was a huge furor and hysteria in this country over the potential terror threat.

Presumably, U.S. medical authorities either wouldn't test human subjects with an untested vaccine or couldn't get approval to do so (remember the notorious Tuskegee experiment?). But their Israeli colleagues were more than happy to bend medical and ethical rules, especially in return for the hundreds of millions of shekels in research funding that flowed into Nes Ziona as a result. Because the subject of the experiment (anthrax that might be used as part of a terror attack) was so sensitive, those who conducted the Israeli experiment refused to tell the IDF "volunteers" (some of whom reported being pressured by their superiors to participate) the purpose of the project. They would not tell them with what they were being injected or why. They weren't warned of possible side effects (of which there were many subsequently). Further, they threatened that if participants spoke of the project they would be punished.

After they were injected, a number of subjects developed serious side effects which included:

...Among others - Crohn's disease, thyroid inflammation, allergic dermatitis reactions and temporary kidney failure.

When victims demanded explanations about what had been done to them, they were stonewalled. Eventually, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel took up their case. But Nes Ziona, the IDF and ministry of defense adamantly denied responsibility and refused compensation for the victims. Eventually, it reached the Supreme Court, which ordered arbitration resulting in today's agreement. 92 of the 700 original test subjects participated in the lawsuit. At \$9,000 for each of those who were members of the class that sued, it seems the Dr. Franksteins who organized this got off too easy. Nor did the government have to accept fault for its role in sanctioning this experiment. A \$5-million medical fund will be

established to provide for any future medical treatment resulting from the experiment.

The Israel Medical Association studied the scientific trial and issued a scathing report saying organizers had ignored basic medical and ethical standards as specified in the Declaration of Helsinki. Further it found:

The report also questioned the necessity of the experiment and suggested that it served interests other than those of the State of Israel. According to foreign reports, the Institute for Biological Research shared its findings from the experiment with the United States in exchange for the investment of hundreds of millions of shekels in the institute.

It may not be an accident that the above passage appears in Yossi Melman's English language article on the Jerusalem Post. But that version has disappeared from the site to be replaced by the version written by Yaakov Lapin, which I mentioned above. Lapin's version contains no reference to the participation of Nes Ziona in the experiment, nor does it mention the troubling reference to U.S. authorities paying to use Israeli subjects as guinea pigs.

Frankly, you would think that a nation, some of whose citizens had been subjected to gruesome medical experiments by the Nazis would be more sensitive to the issue of consent and transparency in medical experimentation. The Nes Ziona doctor who organized the project has conveniently retired. The institute has affirmed that all future such trials will be conducted under the Helsinki protocols. Too late for the 700 unsuspecting subjects of this medical trial.

Let's not forget Nes Ziona is also the place that develops other far more lethal chemical and biological weapons. It also develops secret toxins used to assassinate Palestinian militants as happened in the case of Khaled Meshal and Mahmoud al-Mabouh, among others. A future president of Israel, [Ephraim Katzir was the founder](#) of the institute. To his credit, when Ben Gurion proposed the idea, Chaim Weizmann, a scientist with a stronger ethical compass, wanted nothing to do with it. Although the institution he founded, the Weizmann Institute, has also participated in Israeli WMD research.

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