CDC
BEGINNINGS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was established as the Office of Malaria Control in War Areas (MCWA) by the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) during World War II, to reduce malaria around American military installations. Atlanta was selected as the MCWA headquarters because of its central location in the southern U.S. where malaria was then common.

At the end of World War II, the federal government provided resources to fight contagious (or communicable) diseases throughout the U.S. On July 1, 1946, MCWA was renamed the Communicable Disease Center (CDC) with offices located in Georgia (Atlanta, Chamblee, Savannah) and Alabama (Montgomery).

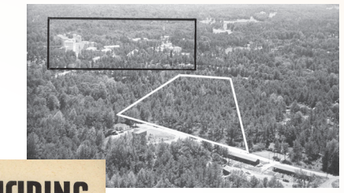
Encouraged by Robert W. Woodruff, the philanthropist and chairman of The Coca-Cola Company and Emory University board member, Emory transferred 15 acres of land in 1947 to the USPHS for just $10 to use for the construction of a central CDC campus. Even in the era of the 5¢ Coke, this was an extraordinary value.

This is the property provided to CDC for its original campus—Michael Street on your left marks the dividing line between CDC and Emory. Construction began in 1955 after Congress provided $12 million for the project. The new campus included six buildings designed by Atlanta architectural firm Robert and Company, and was dedicated on September 8, 1960. By the time of its dedication, expansion plans were already underway for the campus. Between 1961 and 1964, six major additions were made to the original buildings and two new buildings were constructed, including a laboratory, mechanical shop, and warehouse.

Headquarters buildings under construction, 1959

1940s

A 1945 Malaria Control in War Areas (MCWA) publication produced by the United States Public Health Service (USPHS).



Emory University (outlined in black) transferred 15 acres of land (outlined in white) along Clifton Road in 1947 to the USPHS for CDC's first headquarters.

A 1946 Communicable Disease Center (later called CDC) mosquito-control publication that built upon the work of its predecessor—MCWA.

1950s

An Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) officer takes a throat specimen used in the diagnosis of polio (myelitis). EIS continues to support vaccination campaigns and monitoring activities.

In 1957, the USPHS transferred its Venereal Disease (VD) unit to CDC, which began activities including providing state-of-the-art lab training, helping to build capacity among state laboratory technicians in particular. CDC continues to work to prevent sexually transmitted diseases.

The Epidemiologic Intelligence Service (EIS) was established in 1951 to train disease detectives. The worn-out shoe leather logo became the EIS symbol because EIS officers do field work investigating disease outbreaks around the world.

In the 1950s, VD posters, such as this one, were used to raise awareness about the risks for sexually transmitted diseases.

1960s

In 1961, CDC began to publish the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR). The crown jewel of CDC science communications and published every Thursday since then, MMWR often publishes new science within hours or days of new discoveries.

Vaccination campaigns, led by CDC and funded through the 1961 Vaccine Assistance Act, contributed to a dramatic decrease in cases of childhood diseases such as measles. By the end of the decade, cases of measles had been reduced more than 93 percent, from 503,000 in 1962 to under 26,000 in 1969.

This 1966 aerial photo shows CDC's completed headquarters buildings along Clifton Road. Emory's campus is visible in the upper left.

In 1967, CDC took over quarantine activities within the U.S. and at U.S. borders. This USPHS cutter ship transported quarantine inspectors who boarded and cleared ships to dock at U.S. ports.

A 1963 poster featuring "Wellbee," CDC's national symbol of public health that helped promote the polio vaccine.

Following the 1960s outbreaks of Lassa fever and Marburg fever (highly deadly diseases), CDC built new maximum containment laboratories. Here, CDC microbiologists investigate Marburg fever in what was then a state-of-the-art "hot lab."

To learn more about CDC's rich history, visit the David J. Sencer CDC Museum.
www.cdc.gov\museum

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