Yellow fever has not plagued India like other epidemics, in spite of the vector *A. aegypti* occurring in tropical and subtropical areas of Asia including India. The transatlantic slave trade was probably the means of introduction into the Western hemisphere from Africa. It is common in tropical and subtropical areas of South America and Africa with outbreaks in the 18th and 19th Century.

The acceptance of Carlos Finlay’s work on mosquito hypothesis was one of the most important and it had far reaching effect on the Walter Reed Commission of 1900 who proved Finlay’s hypothesis.

Max Theiler (1899-1972) was born in Pretoria, South Africa, to Swiss born parents in 1899. He enrolled at St. Thomas’s Hospital in London and in London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He received his MD degree in 1922. He was induced by professor Stellard to take a research post in the Department of Tropical Medicine at Harvard Medical School in Boston. Here he studied a number of infectious diseases.

Later he worked on Yellow fever. American surgeon Walter Reed had established connection between mosquito and the disease. He sought control of Yellow fever by eliminating mosquitoes. In 1911, investigators discovered that mosquitoes could carry the disease, and could transmit the disease from monkey to monkey and from monkeys to human. Thus it became obvious that vaccine was needed to control the disease. In 1927 Yellow fever virus was isolated in West Africa. In 1930, Theiler joined International health division of Rockefeller Foundation, a world renowned centre for virus research. Mouse provided a new research model that was less expensive and more easily available than monkeys which was developed by him.

Theiler continued his mice studies at the institute, finding that the yellow fever virus became less virulent in monkeys after many passages through mouse brain. The weakened strain was used in 1930s and 1940s by French Government to protect the French territories in Western Africa. Theiler also cultivated the virus in tissue culture using chicken egg, working with Eugene Haagen.

In 1937, studies succeeded when a strain known as Asibi strain underwent a change that rendered it harmless. This became the basis of live vaccine of attenuated virus, known as 17D strain that was field tested in Brazil the next year. The newer vaccine was not only more effective but was easier to mass produce. In 1951, Theiler was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine. Now vaccine based on vero cells are in the development and should replace 17D at some point.

Theiler remained with Rockefeller Foundation, becoming the Director of laboratories of the Foundation’s Division of Medicine and Public Health, New York. Honors awarded to him include Chalmer’s Medal of Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (1939), the Flattery Medal (1945) and Lasker Award of Lasker Foundation (1949). Max Theiler died of lung cancer in 1972.