

Joseph A Cook

Joseph A Cook graduated from Chickasha High School in 1952. His paternal grandfather was the Superintendent of Schools in the early 1900s. Dr. Cook attended the University of Oklahoma, graduating in 1956. He served as an officer in the U.S. Navy and then entered medical school at Vanderbilt School of Medicine graduating in 1964. He trained in internal medicine at the University of North Carolina Medical Center and received a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship to study tropical medicine at Harvard School of Public Health. Following this, he was an overseas staff member for the Rockefeller Foundation, conducting critical research in the treatment and prevention of the tropical parasitic disease, schistosomiasis. He served as the Associate Director for International Research for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and for the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. He served as president of American society of Tropical Medicine. He has been a visiting professor at the University of North Carolina and the Cairo University and Al Azhar University in Egypt. He served on advisory councils and committees at the national Institutes of Health, USAID, the World Health Organization, the Institute of medicine, the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, the Canadian International Development and Research Centre and other agencies dealing with international health and tropical medicine.

For twenty-one years (1979-1999), Dr. Cook was the director of the Tropical Disease Research Program of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation in New York City. Not satisfied with these many accomplishments, he was instrumental in developing an exciting new program to eliminate the main cause of preventable blindness in the world. In 1999, he became the executive director of the International Trachoma Initiative, a joint venture of the Edna McConnell Clark foundation and Pfizer, Inc., the pharmaceutical company. Additional sizeable grants have come from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Department of International Development, United Kingdom. In his role as director, he is leading the international effort to reduce the infectious eye disease, trachoma. This disease, estimated to affect 150 million people throughout the world and will cause blindness in as many as 5.6 million, especially affecting women and children. Dr. Cook and the International Trachoma Initiative have started the SAFE strategy (Surgery on the damaged eyes, Antibiotics, Facial hygiene, and Environmental change) with the goal of eliminating trachoma by the year 2020.

Dr. Joseph A Cook was inducted into the Chickasha High School Hall of Fame in 2002.