Cervical cancer was the first human cancer to be unequivocally associated with a virus infection, and kills 250,000 women worldwide every year. Development and demonstration of the efficacy of a preventative vaccine was a global team effort, and a testimony to the power of cooperation between researchers, government agencies and philanthropy. The lecture will address some lessons learnt, and some challenges still to be overcome to get the full benefit of the technology breakthrough that enabled the development of the vaccine.