

The Mould in Dr Florey's Coat  
The Remarkable True Story of the Penicillin Miracle by Eric Lax.  
Little Brown 2004.

Everybody thinks they know who discovered penicillin, Alexander Fleming, at St Mary's Hospital Paddington in 1928. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, this is not the whole story. Fleming was only able to identify the potential of his discovery but not to develop it due to his inability to isolate it from the medium in which it grew.

The credit for the transformation that changed the world of medicine and has since saved countless millions of lives is due to three other scientists, Professors Ernst Chain (a Jewish refugee from Nazism), Howard Florey and Norman Heatley, who shared the Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine with Fleming in 1945.

Eric Lax has written a racy book that engages the reader throughout in the twists and turns of a scientific and human story that underlays one of the greatest scientific discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and brings to life the character of the four men whose names will irrevocably be associated with it. In case you are wondering about the title, it refers to the plan shared by the scientists about what to do to prevent the Nazis from getting their hands on their discovery should they have invaded the United Kingdom. In view of the durability of penicillin spores the idea was to secret them in their clothing for development in a laboratory at a later date. Thankfully this operation never needed to be put into effect!

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