

Fact File: Paul Ehrlich (1854 - 1915)



Paul Ehrlich was a member of Robert Koch's team of scientists. He used Robert Koch's method of using dyes to seek out certain bacteria. He was fascinated by the way the body created natural anti-bodies which killed bacteria but did not harm anything else. He became convinced that chemicals could do the same thing as anti-bodies if the right chemicals could be discovered. He described these chemicals as 'magic bullets'.

Despite many years of research, he had little success. In 1905 he was looking for a magic bullet to cure syphilis. He experimented on a number of compounds based on arsenic. They tried 605 variations until they finally found one that worked. They named the drug Salvarsan 606.