

Chronology

- 1931 Rome, July 6. The first stone of the Public Health Institute is laid close to the Cemetery of Rome, the "Policlinico Umberto I" and the Cancer Research Institute "Regina Elena". The Rockefeller Foundation provides funding up to one million dollars for the construction of the building.
- 1934 The law of January 11, 1934 defines the status and the functions of new Institute: "The Institute of Public Health is established in Rome, in the service of Home Affairs, as a center for investigations, researches and verifications, pertaining to public health services and for the specialization of the personnel of the said services in the kingdom". The first directors are Gaetano Basile (1934-1935) and, for four months, Dante De Blasi.
April 21. Official inauguration of the Public Health Institute.
- 1935 July 25. Domenico Marotta is appointed Director of the Public Health Institute.
The Radium Office moves from via Panisperna, in Rome, to the Public Health Institute. Established in 1923, the Radium Office was directed by Giulio Cesare Trabacchi. In 1925, it was re-named "Physics Laboratory of Public Health" and was housed by the Royal University Physics Institute in Rome. Most celebrated physicists, such as Enrico Fermi, Franco Rasetti, Emilio Segrè, Edoardo Amaldi and Bruno Pontecorvo work in the Physics Laboratory.
The Public Health Institute resumes some of the Rockefeller Foundation activities. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Rockefeller Foundation had been instrumental in creating the Experimental Station for the Fight against Malaria. An American scientist, Lewis W. Hackett, collaborates with Alberto Missiroli, one of the most important malariologists in Italy.
- 1938 Enrico Fermi moves to the United States. In the same year, he receives the Nobel Prize for Physics.
- 1941 The Institute takes today's denomination: Istituto Superiore di Sanità (National Institute of Health).
- 1945 The Institute comes through undamaged during the Second World War. The number of activities in the biology and microbiology laboratories increase. The Institute is fully operational in the fight against malaria. In order to eliminate the vectors of malaria, a new compound is employed for the first time in Italy: DDT.
Ernst Boris Chain, who will be heading a Center within the Institute in later years, is awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine together with Alexander Fleming and Howard Florey.
- 1946 Missiroli presents a plan to defeat malaria. The plan is approved by the High Commissariat for Hygiene and Public Health.
- 1947 Marotta invites Daniel Bovet to join the Institute and to direct the Laboratory of Therapeutic Chemistry. Bovet enters upon office in 1948.
- 1948 Marotta invites Ernst Boris Chain to set up the International Center for Microbiological Chemistry. A strong impulse to the development of the biotechnological research is provided.
- 1957 Daniel Bovet is awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for his discovery of synthetic compounds for the blocking of the effects of certain substances occurring in the body, especially in blood vessels and skeletal muscles.

- 1958 The Institute falls within the remit of the newly established Ministry of Health.
- 1961 After 26 years, Marotta leaves the Institute.
- 1964 Daniel Bovet leaves the Institute. Giordano Giacomello, a chemist, is Marotta's successor. After three years, G. Battista Marini Bettolo Marconi is appointed Acting Director. His designation will be confirmed only in 1968.
- 1969 A legislative bill on the reform of the Institute is withdrawn. In an atmosphere of general upsetting, the Institute staff sit in a permanent assembly. The Italian police clear the ground and arrest demonstrators.
- 1972 Francesco Pocchiari is the new Director of the Institute.
- 1973 The law of August 7, 1973, n. 519 modifies the tasks, regulations and structure of the Institute, that gets more funds for the biomedical and health research and carries out control activities.
- The Institute is present in different health emergencies in Italy such as:
- the epidemic cholera in Naples and in other places in Southern Italy (1973). The Institute coordinates the epidemiological observatories for the infectious diseases;
 - dioxin-leak at the ICMESA plant in Seveso (1976). The Institute plays an important role in locating and isolating the polluted area and in reckoning the risk for the population;
 - earthquake in Irpinia (1981). The ISS overtakes the emergency by preparing landing hospitals, either civil or military, vaccinating the local population and re-establishing waterworks;
 - Chernobyl nuclear accident (1986). The Institute evaluates information about pollution, collected from different parts of the Italian territories.
- 1989 Francesco Pocchiari dies. Vincenzo Longo is ad interim Director for a short while, before Francesco Antonio Manzoli is appointed.
- 1993 Giuseppe Vicari, Head of the Immunology Laboratory, leads the Institute; only in 1995, however, his appointment is validated.
- 1996 Aurelia Sargentini acts as the Director of the Institute from 1995 to 1996; Giuseppe Benagiano, Professor of obstetrics and gynecology and responsible for many World Health Organization programmes, is the new Director of the Institute.
- 2001 With a Presidential decree (70/2001) a new Regulation is issued. The legal status of the Institute is modified. As public corporation and technical and scientific body of the Servizio Sanitario Nazionale (National Health Service) the Institute carries out activities of research, clinical trials, control, consultation, documentation and training in public health. Enrico Garaci is the first President of the new Institute and Romano Rosario Di Giacomo is the Director General.
- 2002 Sergio Licheri is the new Director General.
- 2003 The new organizational chart is structured into seven Departments - Environment and Primary Prevention; Cell Biology and Neurosciences; Haematology, Oncology and Molecular Medicine; Drug Research and Evaluation; Infectious, Parasitic and Immune-Mediated Diseases; Food Safety and Veterinary Public Health; Technology and Health - and into 2 National Centers - National Center for Epidemiology, Surveillance and Health Promotion and National Center for Food Quality and Risk Assessment.
- 2004 The ISS celebrates its 70th birthday.

Information for this Chronology is from:

Bignami G. Origins and subsequent development of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità in Rome (Italy). *Annali d'Igiene* 2002;14(Suppl. 1):67-95.

Donelli G, Serinaldi E. Dalla lotta alla malaria alla nascita dell'Istituto di Sanità Pubblica. Il ruolo della Rockefeller Foundation in Italia: 1922-1934. Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza; 2003.