Born June 11, 1937, in North Adelaide, South Australia, John Robin Warren was a fifth generation South Australian. His father studied viticulture and became one of Australia’s leading wine makers. His maternal grandfather, Sydney Verco, was a physician, but died young, leaving his wife without sufficient financial support to educate their 4 children. Nonetheless, she managed to send all of them to private schools, including a son, Luke, who studied medicine.

Although Warren’s mother was a nurse and had wanted to be a physician, she did not advise her son to study medicine. Instead his uncle Luke, a captain in the Army Medical Corps during World War II and subsequently a rural general practitioner, influenced young Warren. As a youth, Warren often rode his bicycle through the Adelaide hills where he took many photographs and became an accomplished landscape photographer, which developed into a lifelong hobby.

Warren graduated from St. Peter’s College (a well-known academic secondary school in Adelaide) and received a Commonwealth government scholarship. He gained admission to the Medical School of Adelaide University in 1955 despite a personal history of grand mal seizures caused by epilepsy.

During medical school, he met and married a fellow medical student, Winifred Williams, who ultimately became a well-respected psychiatrist. Warren wanted to become a registrar in psychiatry but was unsuccessful in obtaining a position, so he settled on being a registrar in clinical pathology at the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science, which was attached to the Royal Adelaide Hospital. In practice this consisted mainly of laboratory hematology, which included the interpretation of peripheral blood smears and bone marrows. He became a temporary lecturer in pathology at Adelaide University where he studied morbid anatomy and histopathology.

He then became a Clinical Pathology Registrar at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Following 2 years of training he passed the exams in hematology and microbiology. This was followed by further training in morbid anatomy and histopathology. After 4 years of study in Melbourne, he obtained a position as pathologist at the Royal Perth Hospital at the University of Western Australia in 1968.

During the 1970s Warren became interested in gastric biopsies. In 1979, he first noted that bacteria were growing on the surface of a gastric biopsy. He collected many gastric biopsies over the next 2 years and noted the frequent presence of chronic gastritis and “curved” bacteria in the biopsy. Normal biopsies from the gastric antrum were uncommon, but he eventually found 20 normal biopsies and they did not show the bacteria. In 1981, he met Barry J. Marshall, a resident in gastroenterology who was looking for a research project. Warren had identified a number of patients with the curved bacteria present in their biopsies and needed someone to determine the type of clinical disease that they might have. Marshall was interested and concentrated on the patients who had undergone gastric biopsy.

In 1984, Marshall and Warren reported that spiral or “curved” bacilli were present in specimens from 58 patients with chronic, active gastritis, duodenal ulcer, or gastric ulcer. Bacilli cultured from 11 of these biopsies were gram negative, flagellate and microaerophilic, and appeared to be a new species related to the genus *Campylobacter*. They stated that these bacteria were present in almost all patients with active, chronic gastritis, duodenal ulcer, or gastric ulcer and that they might be an important factor in the etiology of these diseases. Treatment of these patients with antibiotics resulted in disappearance of the bacteria and healing of the ulcer. They also reported that eradication of the bacteria markedly reduced the relapse rate of duodenal ulcer.
The medical community finally recognized the role of Helicobacter (as the bacteria was renamed in 1989) after Marshall self-experimented by drinking a culture of the “curved” bacilli in 1984. This resulted in nausea, vomiting, and achlorhydria. A gastric biopsy revealed severe gastritis and the presence of the organism. He then took antibiotics and recovered.

Warren also helped in the development of the 14C-urea breath-test for detecting H. pylori in peptic ulcer patients in 1989.

Warren and Marshall were subsequently invited to speak at many medical meetings throughout the world. Warren’s wife, Winifred, developed a carcinoma of the pancreas and died in 1997. Warren retired shortly thereafter. J. Robin Warren and Barry J. Marshall received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2005 and Warren was honored on a postage stamp issued by the Solomon Islands (Scott number 14207a) in 2014.