

Vaccinations: the Choice for a Lifetime

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...laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times.

Thomas Jefferson

The number of recommended childhood vaccinations has continued to increase over the last twenty years. Parents, health care providers, scientists, lawmakers and citizens are voicing their concerns. They are raising questions about vaccine safety, efficacy and short and long term side effects. Parents wonder about the vaccine manufacturing process and how each ingredient affects the maturing neurological and immune systems of their children. They are curious about contaminants from foreign human and animal tissues. They question how the ingredients interact with each other and whether this interaction can be harmful. They want scientific data about the accumulation and detoxification of these ingredients over time. In all of these discussions the need to protect our children and prevent serious illnesses prevails.

Parents want to know if all the vaccines are necessary and whether they need to be given simultaneously. A growing number of parents want to choose a vaccine schedule that differs from the one that is recommended. Others wonder if the recommended vaccine schedule will ever stop growing. Many want to at least have the opportunity to talk openly and safely about these issues and concerns. Most importantly, people are worried that in our haste to reduce the incidence of infectious diseases with the use of vaccines, we have done so at a grave cost to our health and the health of our children. They are asking the medical profession and pharmaceutical companies to address these concerns more seriously.

The FDA gives approval for vaccines after reviewing the safety and efficacy studies presented to them. These studies are performed by the vaccine manufacturers themselves. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) follows with a recommendation regarding vaccine dose and scheduling. The financial interests throughout this process have been questioned. There is increasing concern that these financial interests have grown to be equal

to or greater than the health interests of the children who are meant to be protected. Incomes and profits may coincide with the need to report positive outcomes and conclusions from these studies. Thus, there is growing concern about the evaluation process. Parents and scientists alike are also questioning the validity of the scientific methods and the vaccine study designs. There is growing evidence that many of the conclusions and recommendations from these studies are based on belief systems and opinions of the prevailing medical paradigm and not on the foundations of proper scientific inquiry and analysis.

People who ask tough questions about vaccines have faced tremendous scrutiny. They have found that, whether or not they have dissenting views, there is little room for them to speak. Some inquiring parents have been rejected by their spouses, their parents, their doctor's offices and their friends as well as from members of their own community. Some parents have been accused of neglect and abuse and have received threats to have their children taken away from them. Some have had their children taken away. Others have been well received and respected.

The current debate about vaccines is very volatile. There are many who feel strongly that vaccinations are responsible for reducing the incidence of preventable diseases and have helped save many lives. There are others who believe that the incidence of these diseases, for which we now vaccinate our children, had been on the decline before the introduction of vaccinations. They believe that better nutrition, sanitation and hygiene have played a stronger role in improving our health and life expectancy and cite CDC evidence to support this contention. Still others believe that while vaccinations have helped wipe out many serious infectious illnesses they have also contributed to the development of major short and long term health problems. Experts tout the scientific studies supporting the safety and efficacy of vaccines while others refute these claims. An increasing number of experts allude to the growing body of scientific evidence that indicates vaccines are neither safe nor effective. The problem is that each group of experts has a different take on what determines safety and efficacy.

Who do you believe? Despite the contradictions, can both sides be right? Can vaccines be responsible for wiping out major infectious diseases and, at the same time, have little to do with the decrease in disease incidence? Do children benefit from having several of these childhood illnesses? If vaccines are responsible for wiping out major infectious diseases do they also play a role in the development of acute and chronic illnesses? Has the benefit of eliminating infectious diseases in children been outweighed by the risks to our health from

the side effects of the vaccines? Can we continue to accept from the dominant medical paradigm that the development of a growing number of acute and chronic pediatric and adult illnesses cannot be related to side effects from the vaccines? Is each group of scientific experts correct when they say that vaccines are both safe and effective or unsafe and ineffective? Is one belief system or one set of scientific studies and their conclusions better or truer than the other?

In the past, a small number of parents watched as their children became neurologically impaired after a measles infection. From their perspective, no other child or family should suffer this outcome, however rare its occurrence may be. In their eyes, every child should receive the measles vaccine to protect them from a measles infection and the possibility of a serious outcome. Other parents watched as their children became neurologically damaged after receiving a measles vaccine. This was their truth despite what the authorities called a coincidence. In their eyes, no child should get the measles vaccine. The issue for many parents is very emotional.

Parents and scientists have questioned the need for the measles vaccine. Measles infections can be beneficial for the maturity of a child's neurological and immune system. Measles is a benign disease leaving only 3 in 10,000,000 deaths by 1957, 6 years before the introduction of the first measles vaccine. Even serious neurological outcomes (SSPE-subacute sclerosing panencephalitis) from the illness are rare and would be rarer if the right nutritional treatments and preventive measures were taken before, during and after the illness. By 1960, the incidence of SSPE was 61 cases per 10,000,000 measles infections.

What makes a few children suffer severe effects from a measles infection while the vast majority recovers without a problem? What makes others develop neurological damage after the measles vaccine while others who are vaccinated appear to be in good health? What determines the expression of a measles virus or any other viral infection even in a child who is supposed to be protected by the vaccine? Can we give every child the same vaccine expecting the same response from each one even though no two children are alike? Can we continue to treat each child the same as the next? Is a mass vaccination program necessary and does it protect more than it harms?

Many parents and scientists are concerned about the growing incidence of autism and autism spectrum disorder over the last 10-20 years. Parents are beginning to see the development of neurological problems in their children either immediately or soon after having their

children vaccinated with the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. Some children with autism/autism spectrum disorder clinically present like those who develop SSPE after a natural measles infection. The medical authorities believe the relationship between autism and the MMR is impossible.

A recent study from the Mind Institute in California showed that the increased incidence in autism, now claiming one in every 250 California children, is real and not due to an increased ability for health care providers to make the diagnosis. Recent research by Dr. Wakefield et al and Dr. V.K. Singh has shown that there is a subpopulation of children with susceptible nutritional, intestinal and immune deficiencies who develop autism/autism spectrum disorder related to the administration of the MMR vaccine. Clearly, if this research can be replicated and is found to be true, the incidence of autism/autism spectrum disorder is much greater than what we would see if children were allowed to get a wild measles infection.

How we decipher these issues depends a great deal on our fundamental belief systems, our prejudices, our fears, our ties to special interests, our intentions and our level of inquiry, discovery and interpretation of the information we receive. Finding truth depends on how we ask the questions, how we interpret the answers and in whose authority we place our trust. As a result of the contradictions, a growing number of parents are discovering their own truths about vaccinations and placing the ultimate authority in their own hands. It behooves the medical profession and the vaccine manufacturers to take a serious look at the way in which we discover and publish information about vaccinations and in whose interests we draw our conclusions. There are many questions about vaccinations for which we do not have the answers. We need to expand our thinking beyond what we know now and learn to examine the contradictory information with an open mind.

Perceptions and realities about vaccine safety and efficacy are shifting. Yet, these differing opinions can co-exist even though they seem to contradict each other. Parents have found the courage to educate themselves and explore the topic of vaccinations. They are beginning to weigh some of the pros and cons about vaccinating and looking at each child's health on an individual basis. Parents are beginning to discover their own ideas about wellness and illness, how the immune system works and how they can support it. Many of the so-called alternative modalities-nutrition, herbology, Chinese medicine, homeopathy, Ayurveda, chiropractic, osteopathic-provide a wealth of information about prevention and safe treatment for childhood acute and chronic illnesses.

Parents want to prevent their children from getting infectious diseases-so do the medical providers, health officials and pharmaceutical company executives. Vaccines were developed and manufactured to prevent further morbidity and mortality from childhood illnesses. In our haste to meet the public demand for curbing these illnesses, we developed vaccines that meet this need but are manufactured without sufficient scrutiny. We are now faced with some tough questions about the ways in which vaccines are manufactured and administered, the ingredients that are used and, the effect(s) of each of these ingredients on a child's immune system and their interaction with each other in the body.

A good scientist asks tough questions. A good scientist is open to the possibility that the answers to these questions can be contrary to what was previously hypothesized and perceived to be true information. Knowledge and wisdom can only be furthered by continuing to ask questions. If the scientific and medical communities have nothing to hide, the questions and their answers will not be a threat to the existing belief system. If anything, the answers will merely add to our level of understanding of vaccinations and bring us to a greater truth, all with the intention of providing the safest and most effective health care for our children.

References available on line at:

http://www.icpa4kids.com/chiropractic_newsletter_references_2003.htm