

Some Worries About Childhood Vaccinations Are Legitimate

Should Vaccinations be Mandatory?, 2010

Gary Null, an advocate of alternative medicine and natural healing, is the host of the radio program *Natural Living with Gary Null* and coauthor of *Germes, Biological Warfare, Vaccinations: What You Need to Know*. Martin Feldman is an assistant clinical professor of neurology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City.

There are many legitimate concerns about vaccinations. Vaccines may provoke latent illnesses and do not result in real immunity. The fact that vaccines are mandated and funded without choice is dangerous to consumers who have no freedom in the situation. Furthermore, the right to refuse vaccination varies from state to state and is not guaranteed. Individuals should have the power to gather information about vaccines and make up their own minds. Given the possible dangers associated with vaccines, strengthening the immune system in alternative ways may be preferable to subjecting the body to these substances that could cause more harm than good.

Those who take issue with universal immunization point out that the programs do not distinguish between children who may benefit from a certain vaccine and those who may be hurt by it. Infants are given blanket immunization regardless of their previous or current state of health and their varying susceptibilities to side effects. Ideally, the vaccination system should be much more selective, with parents being given complete information, so they can decide whether the risks associated with a particular procedure outweigh its potential benefits. Just as different races may suffer disproportionately from allergies and food sensitivities, studies indicate that they may experience different reactions to vaccines.

People engaged in the fight against government-mandated vaccines share their concerns here about several vaccination issues.

Provocation Disease

One of the most hazardous and insidious effects of vaccination lies in its potential to induce other forms of disease, a phenomenon known as provocation disease. The mechanisms that cause this to happen are unclear, although many scientists believe that latent viruses—those already existing in a person—may be stimulated by vaccinations and that this process may be enough to activate a particular illness. Vaccination, therefore, may not be the sole cause but rather the final trigger of an illness.

In his book *Vaccination and Immunization: Dangers, Delusions and Alternatives*, Leon Chaitow states that there is no way of knowing when such latent or incubating situations may be operating, and therefore no way of knowing when a vaccine may produce this sort of provocation. He warns that provocation of a latent virus is a potentially dangerous possibility with every vaccination procedure.

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Many diseases thought to be caused at least partially by vaccinations do not surface until years later, by which time it is difficult to prove a connection. Two examples of conditions that may be provoked by

vaccines are as follows:

- *Allergies.* According to Dr. Harris Coulter, co-author of *A Shot in the Dark*, and other experts, vaccines and allergies are clearly connected. "What does allergy mean? It means that your body is ready to react very, very quickly when exposed a second time to a substance to which it is allergic. If you are allergic to ragweed, [a small amount] of ragweed will start you sneezing. Now, if you vaccinate a person against pertussis or some other bacillus, you are making that person 'allergic' to that bacillus. That's what being vaccinated actually means. It means you are 'allergic' to that bacillus, in the sense that your body will react very, very rapidly if exposed to that bacillus a second time."
- *Immunosuppression and Autoimmune Disease.* The body needs to experience a full inflammatory response to create immunity, and vaccines do not allow this to happen. Instead, a chronic condition is created that can set the stage for autoimmune disease. Autoimmune diseases such as Guillain-Barre syndrome [paralysis] and thrombocytopenia [a serious blood disorder] have been associated with vaccinations.

In *Immunization: The Reality Behind the Myth*, author Walene James suggests that vaccinations may induce autoimmune disorders because "live viruses, the primary antigenic material of [some] vaccines, are capable of surviving or remaining latent in the host cell for years, without provoking acute disease." Live virus vaccines include those for chickenpox, measles, mumps, rubella, and oral polio.

Cynthia Cournoyer, author of *What About Immunizations?*, believes a key principle involved in the many negative effects of vaccines is that the immune system can tolerate only so many challenges, especially before it is given a chance to develop to maturity. "Every child," she writes, "is born with a finite ability to combat disease. This is his total immune capacity. Once a child experiences a particular disease, permanent immunity is extremely efficient, using probably three percent to seven percent of the total immune capacity of an individual. In the case of routine childhood vaccination, it is likely that as much as 30% to 70% of total immune capacity becomes committed."

Cournoyer proposes that this effect on immunity may substantially reduce a child's immunological reserves. "Far from producing a genuine immunity, a vaccine may actually interfere with or suppress the immune response as a whole, in much the same way that radiation, chemotherapy, and corticosteroids and other anti-inflammatory drugs do." Cournoyer continues, "Although the body will not make antibodies against its own tissues, viruses becoming part of the genetic make-up may cause cells to appear foreign to the immune system, making them a fair target for antibody production.... Under proper conditions, these latent pro viruses could become activated and cause a variety of diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, lupus erythematosus ... and cancer."

Temporary Immunity of Vaccines

Vaccines provide only temporary immunity, whereas the contraction of an actual disease confers permanent immunity most of the time. Viera Scheibner, a retired research scientist, writes that "generations of children with this inadequate immunity would grow into adults with no placental immunity to pass on to their children, who would then contract measles at an age when babies are normally protected by maternal antibody...."

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"Perhaps the most unfortunate thing about the idea of eliminating infectious diseases by vaccination is that indeed there is no need to do so. As pointed out by the group of Swiss doctors opposing the US-inspired policy of mass vaccination against measles, mumps, and rubella in Switzerland, 'We have lost the common sense and the wisdom that used to prevail in the approach to childhood diseases. Too often, instead of reinforcing the organism's defenses, fever and symptoms are relentlessly suppressed. This is not always without consequences ...'"

Lastly, Scheibner states, "There is no need to artificially immunize our children and ourselves. The body has proper, natural mechanisms to create immunity to diseases. The diseases themselves are the priming and challenging mechanisms of the maturation process leading to the competence of the immune system...."

Economic and Legal Issues

Cynthia Cournoyer has noted that vaccines are the only products in the US that are legally mandated to be used by every person born. Barbara Loe Fisher, cofounder and president of the National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC), Vienna, Virginia, has advocated the right of individuals to make informed, independent vaccination decisions for themselves and their children for two decades. She paints an ominous picture of things to come: "As consumers, we can bring very little economic pressure on the system to have that product improved or removed, because all of us are required by law to use it. It's a dream for the pharmaceutical industry involved in making vaccines, because there's no way anybody can say no. It's a stable, ready-made market, and the enactment of the compensation law in 1986 has removed almost all liability for drug companies...."

Fisher cautions that state health departments may develop electronic systems to monitor the vaccination status of each child. "... If we don't act now, the public health infrastructure is going to get more power to intrude in our lives, intrude in our health care choices. It all comes down to whether or not we, as individuals, are going to fight for the right to make informed health care choices, including vaccination choices, for ourselves and our children, and whether we are going to hold the drug companies and government health officials accountable for the injuries, deaths, and chronic illnesses caused by the vaccines they produce, sell, and promote for mass use."

The National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986 created a no-fault compensation program through which plaintiffs can seek compensation for injuries from vaccines recommended for routine administration. The law also provided, however, that evidence of gross negligence would be needed to seek punitive damages against vaccine manufacturers. The NVIC said in 2003 that it and other parent groups "have been critical of how adversarial the system is and how difficult it is to get an award." Through fiscal year 2001, the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program had paid \$1.3 billion in total awards (petitioner's awards and attorney's fees) for approximately 1,660 compensable petitions.

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The compensation program is funded through an excise tax on vaccines. As a result, consumers foot the bill for any injuries or deaths that may result from medical procedures they are required by law to undergo.

Alan Phillips, co-founder of Citizens for Healthcare Freedom, notes: "[Pharmaceutical companies] have been allowed to use gag orders as a leverage tool in vaccine damage legal settlements to prevent disclosure of information to the public about vaccination dangers. Such arrangements are clearly unethical; they force a non-consenting American public to pay for vaccine manufacturers' liabilities, while attempting to ensure that this same public will remain ignorant of the dangers of their products."

Vaccine critic Randall Neustaedter adds: "When lawsuits leveled at drug companies began wiping out profits gleaned from the pertussis vaccine, the manufacturers simply stopped production of the vaccine. The United States government stepped in to pay these vaccine-damage claims. Only then did the drug companies agree to resume vaccine production...."

Right to Refuse Vaccination

All states have laws mandating the vaccination of children before they enter school, but these laws also allow for various types of exemptions to compulsory vaccination. Parents may seek exemptions on behalf of their children. According to the NVIC, all 50 states allow exemptions based on medical reasons, 48 states allow exemptions for people who have a sincere religious belief opposing vaccination, and 18 states allow exemptions based on philosophical, personal, or conscientiously held beliefs.

The ease of obtaining a vaccination exemption may depend on the type sought and the requirements of the individual's state. In the journal *Pediatrics*, researchers say that "in many states, it is easier to claim a religious or philosophical exemption than to adhere to mandated immunization requirements." On the other hand, Kurt Link, MD, states in *The Vaccine Controversy* that exemptions are often very difficult to obtain and that less than two percent of people who apply for a vaccination exemption obtain one. Link says that parents who are denied an exemption and try to defy the vaccination mandate may have their children excluded from school, may be charged with criminal child abuse or neglect, and may have their children taken into state custody.

Potential Downside to Exemptions

Parents who refuse vaccinations for their children should be aware of other potential consequences as well. The literature shows that unvaccinated children may be at greater risk of contracting diseases covered by routine vaccines. In the *Pediatrics* article, the authors cite research showing that "exemptors" were 22 times more likely to contract measles than were vaccinated people and six times more likely to contract pertussis. In addition, unvaccinated people account for the majority of recent cases of tetanus. A study published in 2006 also found that states allowing personal-belief exemptions and states with easier exemption processes were associated with a higher incidence of pertussis.

The point is that individuals need the freedom to choose.

Another consideration is that pediatricians may dismiss patients who refuse to be vaccinated. In a survey of 1004 members of the American Academy of Pediatrics published in 2005, 39% said they would dismiss a family for refusing all vaccinations, and 28% would dismiss a family for refusing select vaccines.

Varying State Laws

According to the NVIC, parents who want to exempt a child from mandated vaccination must know what types of exemptions the law in their state allows and the type of proof that may be required. In many states offering philosophical or personal-belief exemptions, for example, a parent must object to all vaccines, not particular ones. With medical exemptions, some states will accept without question a letter from a physician saying that one or more vaccines would be detrimental to the health of the patient, while the health departments in other states review such exemptions and may decide one is not justified. With religious exemptions, says the NVIC, state laws differ regarding the definition of the exemption and the proof needed of one's religious beliefs opposing vaccination. In fact, the NVIC does not provide or recommend a prewritten waiver for religious exemptions. If a prewritten waiver does not meet your state's requirements, you may draw attention to your child and, if challenged on the exemption, end up in litigation with your state or county health department in which you must prove your religious beliefs....

Freedom to Choose

The point is that individuals need the freedom to choose. They should not be forced in one direction or another. Fisher stresses this: "Our organization does not tell a parent what to do. I want to make that clear. We are an information clearinghouse, and we believe in education. We believe that parents should take the responsibility for making their own decision. In this society, we ought to have the right to make the right decisions without being bullied and harassed and threatened into vaccinating if we do not believe that it is in the best interest of our child."

Alan Phillips adds, "I don't advocate that people do or do not vaccinate. I say that there's a lot of information that people should investigate before they make a decision one way or the other. We're so steeped in what I would now call the myth of vaccination that it seems nonsensical and counterintuitive to even raise the question. In fact, the first time that I raised the question with a pediatrician I got yelled at. While I think that was unprofessional of the pediatrician, it does demonstrate the degree to which assumptions about vaccinations are held."

Dr. Dean Black, author of *Immunizations: Compulsion or Choice*, states, "As a parent, there might be times I choose to immunize my child. Maybe I would find scientific evidence to back its validity in a case where a disease is so fraught with risk that I dare not expose my child. Maybe then I would choose [to vaccinate]. But I would do so having thoroughly thought about it.... What I believe we cannot tolerate as a free nation is to have government bureaucrats come in and say—based upon false statistics—if you don't immunize your child, you will suffer penalty of law. That, to me, is a gross injustice that simply has to be changed."

The Holistic Health Movement

Fisher believes that if we are concerned about our health and our freedoms, we should be worrying about the future. "I truly believe that unless the public wakes up to what is happening, and starts standing up for their right to be fully informed about vaccines and their right to make informed independent vaccine

decisions, the day will come when we won't have that right. We will be forcibly vaccinated by law without exception."

Fisher urges everyone to stop being complacent, to start becoming informed about vaccines and diseases, and to act. Specifically, she states, "You are going to have to work to amend your state's laws. If you would like to be better informed and to help get the truth out, please join our grassroots vaccine safety movement."

Fisher believes that alternative healthcare modalities in the US will play an important role in the vaccine safety movement. "Those who are looking into ... osteopathic medicine, naturopathic, homeopathic, vitamin therapy, etc., are looking for ways to boost the immune system through more natural means in order to be able to naturally deal with viruses and bacteria that they come in contact with. This is a very important movement."

We do not yet know a single silver-bullet remedy for all childhood illnesses that are known to cause no harm to the future adult.

Dr. Black agrees. He sees vaccinations as a shortcut for people in our society who have not taken full responsibility for their health. "It's a way of saying, don't look at the more natural holistic way of helping the body. Medicine believes disease is the enemy.... Medicine fights disease. Natural health care works with it.... Medicine believes symptoms are evil. Natural health care believes symptoms are the body's efforts to rid itself of disease."

Curtis Cost, author of *Vaccines Are Dangerous: A Warning to the Black Community*, adds, "... parents do not need to be terrified into believing that the only way to protect themselves and their children from disease is through vaccines. We know that if parents breast-feed their babies, the risk of death and disease is dramatically reduced because the breast milk contains all the natural nutrients that the mother will naturally give to her child as she breast-feeds. We know that diet has a tremendous effect on disease. If you are not eating a proper diet, your risk of getting various diseases is much greater. So we need to focus on taking control of our health ... to focus on eating more organically grown fresh fruits and vegetables, on drinking pure water, and on exercising. These actions build up the immune system."

It stands to reason that our approach might be better directed at bolstering natural immunity, by strengthening the body's own disease-fighting capability, than trying to manipulate a carefully balanced system which may or may not tip to the detriment of the future individual. The old adage, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger" describes the credo of the vaccine industry. The problem is that we do not yet know a single silver-bullet remedy for all childhood illnesses that are known to cause no harm to the future adult.

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