Whenever something appalling is said or done by Andrew Wakefield and his supporters, which is all too frequently, I am compelled to point out that 1) there is no scientific evidence supporting their far-fetched idea that vaccines cause autism and 2) their support of the anti-vaxx movement is hurting and even killing children.

Indeed, just last week I wrote about my revulsion over the fact that the movie 'VAXXED: From Cover-up to Catastrophe' was being shown at the Cannes Film Festival.

But, this week is different. This week - I get a break. I get the chance to write about Dr. Lance O'Sullivan - a physician who not only finds the anti-vaccine movement deplorable - he also decided to do something about it.

When the film VAXXED was brought to his town of Kaitaia, Northland, New Zealand, for a showing, Dr. O’ Sullivan did not sit idly by. In fact, he did not sit at all. When the film was being shown, Dr. O'Sullivan protested by walking onto the stage and addressed the audience, challenging the viewers (some of whom are health care providers) to not accept the content of the movie.

He told the film’s audience, after walking onto the stage,
“I come here with a lot of anger. That's because I am adamantly opposed to this because this position, this idea of anti-immunization has killed children around the world and actually will continue to kill children ... whose parents have put off immunization because of misinformation? misinformation based on lies, quite frankly.”

He also said, “Your presence here will cause children to die.”

Dr. O’Sullivan, a father of seven, lives and works in a rural and economically challenged area of New Zealand. He is passionate about the health of the people in his community and has been outspoken in the past about the injustices of obtaining healthcare in poor areas. So, it is easy to understand why he felt the need to act when his hard work was being threatened by a movie full of lies.

So, a big thank you to Dr. O’Sullivan for giving me a break and giving me something hopeful to write about on this long holiday weekend. We need more people like him, willing to stand up and make some noise for science.

Dr. O’Sullivan was awarded the 2014 ‘New Zealander of the Year’ award for the work that he did to bring public health programs to people in need. In 2017, he has become something of a superhero to anyone who supports vaccination (so, basically, the scientific and medical communities.)

Dr. O’Sullivan said in an interview, when asked what he would say to people whose minds are not made up about vaccinations,

You have to have a certain amount of trust in the people who are in the area of health and know what we’re talking about. I don’t mean that in a paternalistic way, but we are dedicated. We are committed to our communities. We’re committed to the health of our country. These people will cause us immeasurable harm and the greatest way to protest is to ignore them.

Please keep up the good work ‘Vaccineman’ and keep fighting the good fight. In the vein of superheroes, remember the words of Commissioner James Gordon from Gotham Central,

“You’re going to make a difference. A lot of times it won’t be huge, it won’t be visible even. But it will matter just the same. Don’t do it for praise or money, that’s what I want to tell you. Do it because it needs to be done. Do it to make your world better.” (1)

Notes:

1) A heated exchange between Dr. O’Sullivan and Tricia Cheel, an anti-vax activist who was responsible for showing the film in Kaitaia can be watched [here](#) [2].
References:

(1) Gotham Central, Book One: In the Line of Duty