

Wakefield's Lies Continue To Harm Somali Kids



By Ruth Kava — July 14, 2017



Infant with Measles Rash [1]

Even though his original article on the supposed connection between the MMR vaccine and autism has been retracted, and Andrew Wakefield has lost his medical license for his fraudulent data, he continues to spread his poisonous opinions about the supposed dangers of vaccines. And an object lesson about the dangers of listening to such messages is the new outbreak of measles among a Somali community in Minnesota — this follows an earlier one which we [wrote about](#) [2] 6 years ago.

Wakefield and other anti-vaccine activists have visited the community, and he has met with the parents of autistic children at least 3 times, according to a recent [story](#) [3] in the *Washington Post*. In 2004, the vaccination rate in that community was 92 percent — high enough to confer herd immunity on those who hadn't been vaccinated. But 10 years later, that rate had dropped to only 42 percent. And the upshot has been the latest measles outbreak recently described in the CDC's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) [4] (MMWR) — and according to that paper the vaccination rate dropped even further to less than 37 percent.

The first case appeared in early April of this year in a hospitalized 2 year old. A day later, another toddler with measles was reported, and this child's sibling had also demonstrated the hallmark rash and fever earlier. None of these children had been vaccinated with the MMR vaccine. Dr. Victoria Hall of the CDC and colleagues reported that the measles virus type affecting these children was *not* the same type used in the vaccine.

Most likely these three children acquired (and spread) the virus at the daycare center that they all attended. And spread it did. By late May of this year 65 cases had been reported, and the investigators determined that the median age of these patients was 21 months. Measles doesn't always affect kids, though, as the oldest patient reported was 49 years old. And the possibility of

contagion was widespread — confirmed cases were from five schools, 12 child care centers, three health care facilities and numerous households, the investigators wrote.

Not only that, 95 percent (62) of the patients were unvaccinated, and the investigators determined that over 8,000 persons could have been exposed to the virus.

As would be expected, public health outreach was intensified, and an accelerated vaccination schedule was advised. And by early May, there were nearly 10,000 doses of vaccines administered compared to 2700 given before the outbreak.

It's mind-boggling that a spurious report like that of Andrew Wakefield could continue to do so much damage years after its falseness was reliably documented. This outbreak provides strong evidence that the public health community must remain vigilant and keep getting the appropriate messages out in a timely fashion.

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[1] <http://www.shutterstock.com>

[2] <http://www.acsh.org/news/2011/03/22/measles-in-minnesota>

[3] https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/anti-vaccine-activists-spark-a-states-worst-measles-outbreak-in-decades/2017/05/04/a1fac952-2f39-11e7-9dec-764dc781686f_story.html?utm_term=.6e5782b0845e

[4] https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6627a1.htm?s_cid=mm6627a1_w