

Every Picture Tells A Story: Vaccine Safety



By *Chuck Dinerstein, MD, MBA* — November 13, 2020

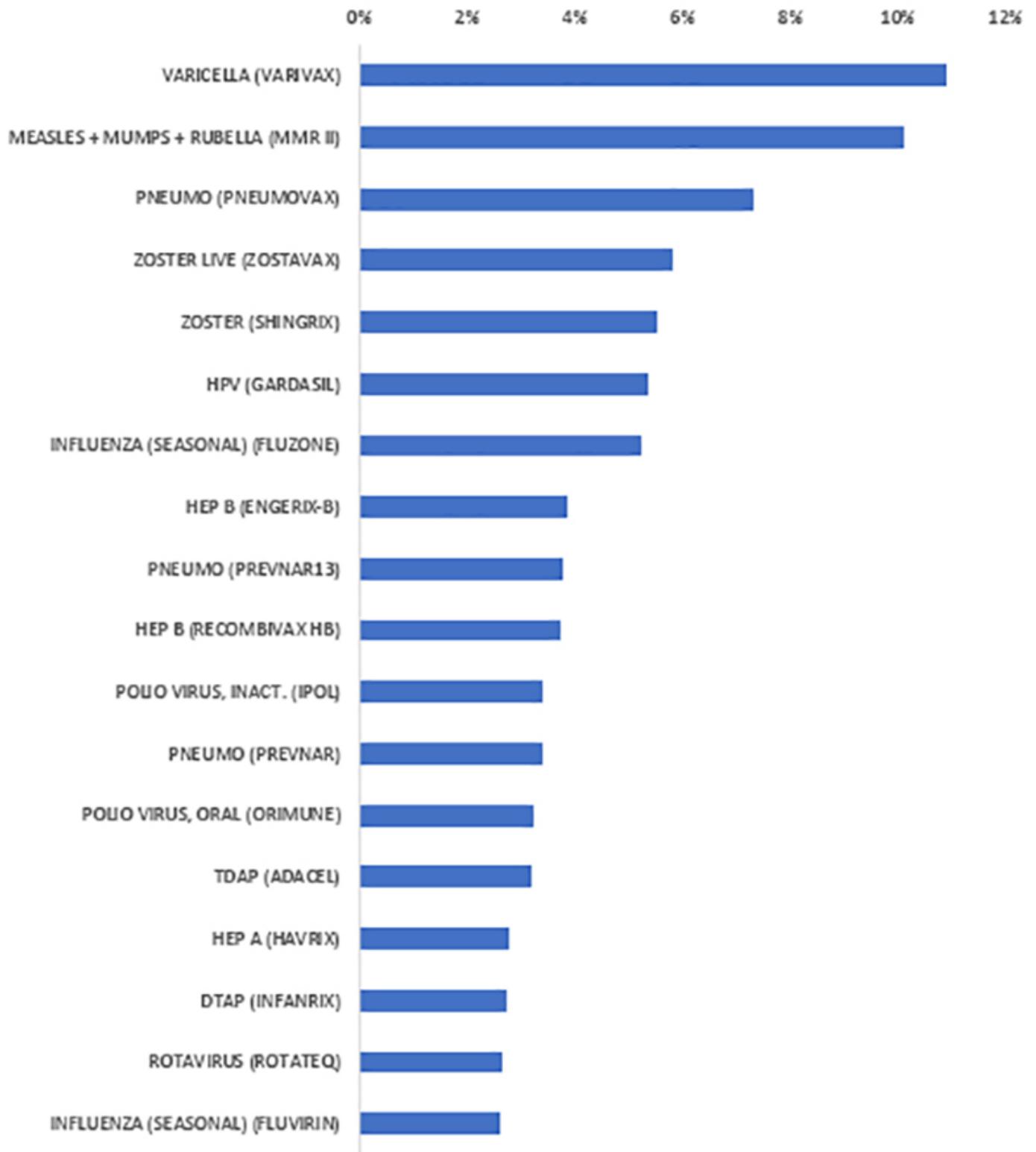
Since 1986, the federal government has tracked vaccines' adverse effects through the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System, or VAERS. It's a post-approval mechanism that captures any adverse event reported to it.



Image courtesy of Katja Fuhlert on Pixabay [1]

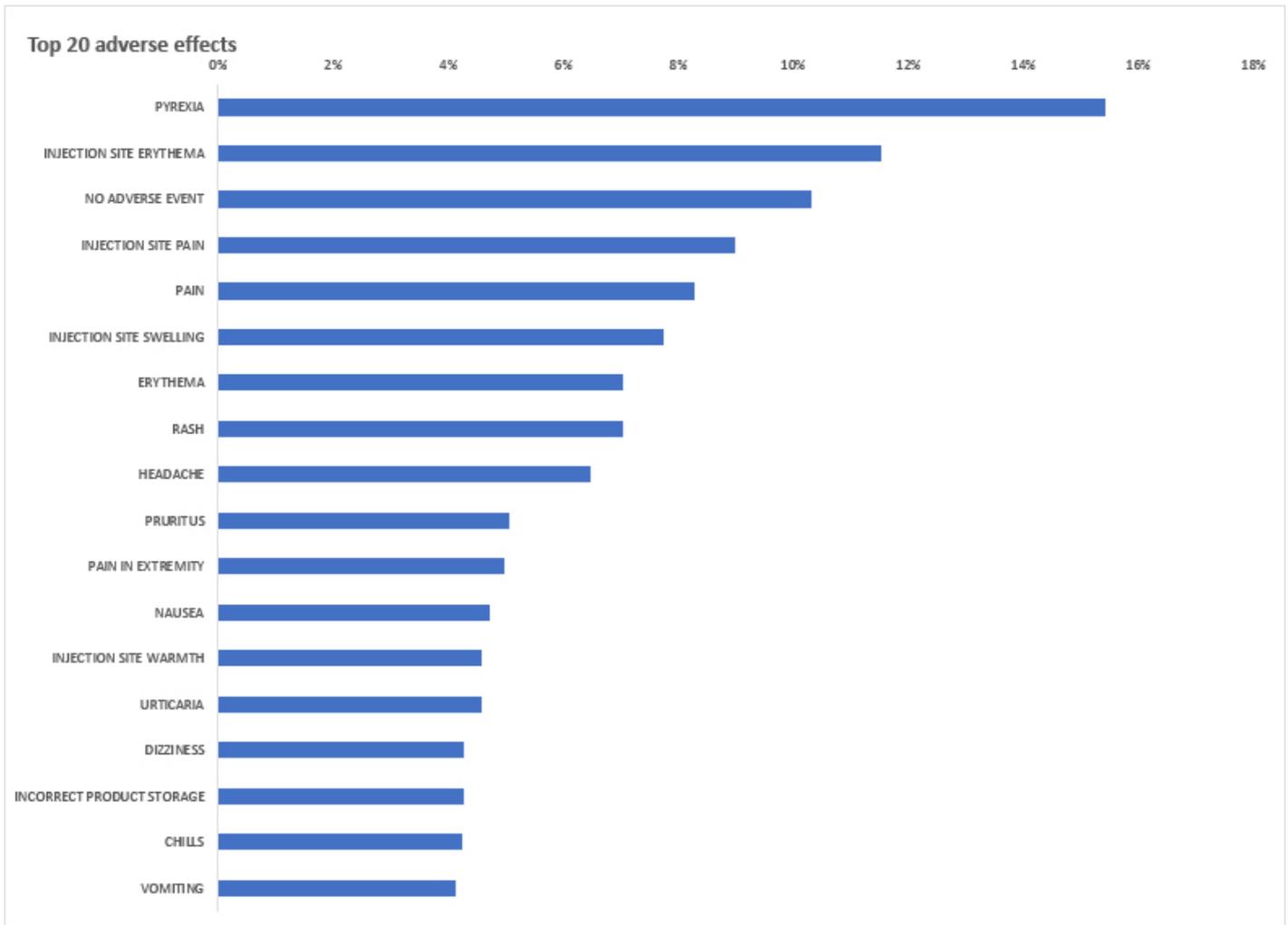
Given that these reports come, in no small degree, from health professionals, it is unlikely that a large number of serious adverse effects, like anaphylactic reactions and deaths, go unreported. Maybe a little fever or rash gets lost. We are talking about 224 different vaccines, in which there have been 687,980 reportable events since 1986. Given all of the discussion about vaccine safety, here are two informative graphs: First, vaccines associated with the largest number of events.

Top 18 vaccines are responsible for 85% of adverse event reports



You can just feel the anti-vaxxers getting ready to pounce as we consider what exactly those adverse effects were. VAERS categorizes nearly 9200 adverse effects, including crying, screaming, abnormal laboratory values, claustrophobia, even a report that vaccination resulted in a cast application. From even this short listing, you should recognize that not all of these adverse effects have been definitively linked to vaccination, only reported as associated. And more than

one symptom may be related to an adverse event.



We are talking about fever, injection site swelling, redness, and pain along with bodily aches, itching, rash, dizziness, and yes, some nausea and vomiting. The eagle-eyed will note that two of these categories include improper storage of the vaccine and no adverse effects reported. And for those anti-vaxxers amongst us, death was reported as an associated but not causal event 0.07% of the time. I am hesitant to mention autism, adding fuel to the disinformation fire, but it was noted in 0.06% of reports - again there is no causal link identified.

While the adverse effects of COVID-19 vaccines are as yet unknown, if the past is any window into the future, they will be safe, certainly safer than COVID-19 for those of us at higher risk or our higher-risk friends and family.

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