

Anti-Vaccine Doc May Face Bias Inquiry

By ACSH Staff — February 24, 2004

Hey, have you heard the claim that childhood vaccinations for measles, mumps, and rubella may cause autism? It's not true, but the myth has nonetheless contributed to the decline in vaccination rates around the world. Well-meaning but superstitious parents seek to "protect" their children from minuscule or non-existent risks from vaccine side effects. Instead, anti-vaccine parents expose their kids and others' to the very *real* risk of being victims in new outbreaks of old diseases we thought were nearly vanquished.

Now it has been revealed that the one man who may have done more than any other to reduce vaccination rates Dr. Andrew Wakefield, author of an extremely small but greatly-hyped study suggesting MMR vaccination causes autism was in the pay of an ambulance-chasing lawyer out to pin the health problems of his clients' kids on vaccine companies. The *Guardian* reports that the UK's General Medical Council will decide whether to investigate and punish Wakefield for professional misconduct.

As Dr. Michael Fitzpatrick argues at [Spiked-Online](#) [1], it will be nice if Wakefield is discredited but would be preferable if he were discredited for the simple reason that his scientific arguments are very weak (they were essentially based on a handful of case studies rather than any careful, large-scale statistical analysis). The scientific journal that published Wakefield's study, *The Lancet*, has publicly apologized and withdrawn the study, which about as harsh a censure as one gets in the scientific community, but it is important to remember that Wakefield's real misdeed was not just his failure to disclose a conflict of interest. The real crime was his failure to do good science even with the fates of millions of children hanging in the balance. The UK's vaccination rates have dropped disturbingly low in some areas, partly thanks to Wakefield, and low enough vaccination rates increase the likelihood of an epidemic.

Perhaps the parents of unvaccinated children should consider suing Wakefield and all the ambulance-chasing anti-vaccine lawyers for a change.

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