

Journalists Frightening Parents Away from Vaccines

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The scare story about vaccines containing mercury and causing autism is still with us, as a recent story on Fox 5 news here in New York City -- and a new book on the topic from St. Martin's Press -- suggest. (Indeed, the Fox 5 story caused such an outpouring of fear from parents that Fox 5 decided...to run it again.)

The newspaper *AM New York* jumped on the bandwagon on March 9, running a completely irresponsible, alarmist, and misleading (when not actually false) article titled "Mercury-Based Preservative in Vaccines May Be Putting Infants at Poisoning Risk." The story may have the unintended effect of sickening and killing infants and children. These needless, preventable deaths will be the predictable result of frightened parents avoiding vaccinations that they would have ordinarily made sure that their children received. Parents will recoil in panic over "poisoning" from mercury-laced vaccines -- which do not in fact exist.

The caption under a photo of vaccinations in the *AM New York* piece states "Vaccines carry a mercury-based preservative to prevent infection." This is false. The mercury-containing preservative Thimerosal has been removed from all vaccines given to children, except for tiny amounts in a few remaining flu vaccines; in any case, it has not been associated with any neurological disorder in children of any age as a result of vaccinations. Analysis of literally hundreds of thousands of study patients has confirmed the lack of any association between children's vaccines and neurological impairments, including autism-spectrum disorders.

The only people still not convinced of the truth of these statements are parents of autistic children, whose judgment is understandably clouded, and plaintiff's attorneys, whose "judgment" is based solely on how much money they can extort from drug companies over unfounded fears.

Meanwhile, unvaccinated children will go on to get preventable childhood diseases and transmit them to their schoolmates and household contacts. In this case, the reporters and editors who fancy themselves watchdogs of public wellbeing should be ashamed.

Gilbert Ross, M.D. is Executive and Medical Director of the American Council on Science and Health.

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