

Many still not immune to nonsensical vaccine-autism link

By ACSH Staff — January 28, 2011

Due to inclement weather in New York City, ACSH was closed yesterday and was unable to distribute our daily *Dispatch*. We're happy to be back on the anti-junk science crusade today with this lineup of great stories.

Yesterday, ACSH staffers braved it through the sky high piles of snow to attend a Manhattan Institute sponsored lecture at the Harvard Club led by ACSH trustee Dr. Paul Offit, head of Infectious Disease at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, who spoke about his new book *Deadly Choices: How the Anti-Vaccine Movement Threatens Us All*. Following the release of a *British Medical Journal* [story](#) [1] which deemed Dr. Andrew Wakefield's 1998 study linking vaccines to autism an "elaborate fraud," Dr. Offit reminds us about the life-saving value of vaccines and how the anti-vaccine movement continues to wreak havoc on public health.

To demonstrate this point more clearly, a recent Harris Interactive/HealthDay poll of 2,026 U.S. adults conducted online from January 11 to 13 found that 18 percent of Americans [think](#) [2] vaccines cause autism, while 30 percent aren't sure and only 52 percent believe the association isn't real. Though 18 percent may not sound like a formidable number, this actually translates to "millions and millions and millions of people, and it's clear that in some cases that has led them to not vaccinate their children," says Humphrey Taylor, chairman of the Harris Poll.

Perhaps the reason why some parents believe the link between autism and vaccines still exists is because only 47 percent of adults polled know that the original study by Dr. Wakefield had been retracted by *The Lancet* journal.

Another reason why some people may be rejecting vaccines is because they have no remembrance or knowledge of the devastating consequences that diseases like pertussis (whooping cough) can have, so they think they can do without these vital inoculations, but they can't, says ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom was one of the attendees at Dr. Offit's lecture and thinks he gave a superb overview of the importance of his rotavirus vaccine, which has reduced hospitalization rates for children anywhere between 40 and 90 percent, depending on the country. "There is no question that this vaccine will save hundreds of thousands of lives. Furthermore, he gave us some amazing insight into the psychology of fear, spread by the media and anti-vaccine groups, that is directly responsible for the unnecessary deaths of children in this country, mostly from infections such as measles and whooping cough."

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2011/01/28/many-still-not-immune-to-nonsensical-vaccine-autism-link>

Links

[1] <http://www.bmj.com/content/342/bmj.c7452.full>

[2] http://www.usatoday.com/yourlife/health/medical/autism/2011-01-22-poll-vaccine-autism_N.htm