

Wakefield to blame for measles outbreak in EU

By ACSH Staff — April 25, 2011

Hopefully the recent whooping cough epidemic in California and now a measles outbreak in Europe will convince anti-vaccine activists that their propaganda is putting thousands of lives at risk.

So far this year, more than 6,500 measles cases have been reported in 33 nations, [according to](#) ^[1] the World Health Organization (WHO), and three-quarters of those originated in France. Between January and March, 4,937 cases have already been reported in that nation, compared to 5,090 total cases in all of 2010. The problem, says Rebecca Martin, head of WHO's office in Copenhagen for vaccine-preventable diseases and immunization, is that not enough young people between the ages of 10 and 19 are getting inoculated as they should be.

About 90 percent of the population needs to be vaccinated in order to confer herd immunity, but ever since a study — shown to be not only wrong but fraudulent — published in *The Lancet* in 1998 by Dr. Andrew Wakefield linked the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine to autism, many parents have foregone this lifesaving preventive for their children. Around Europe, the problem is spreading with 600 measles reports in Spain since October, another 636 cases in Macedonia since September and rising case numbers in Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russia and Switzerland.

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross reminds us that, "Measles can be a devastating disease, causing permanent serious health problems, including death."

The failure to control the outbreak is due to a lack of universal inoculation, says ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, which can be attributed to Dr. Wakefield's now thoroughly-debunked study. "You'd think that news of his fraud would have travelled all over the European Union by now, but sadly not.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom remarks that, "this mentality is reminiscent of the thought processes that took place in Europe during the black plague years."

Adds Dr. Ross, "In addition to Dr. Wakefield, *The Lancet* editor Richard Horton bears a good chunk of blame for publishing that travesty back in 1998."

For a deeper dissection of the breadth of the Wakefield gambit, see this weekend's *The New York Times Magazine* [section](#) ^[2].

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