Meningitis vaccine conspiracy? Calling Jack Bauer!

By ACSH Staff — May 25, 2011

The CDC and its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) have a number of upcoming meetings scheduled to discuss whether to endorse a new meningitis vaccine for infants. Though nothing on the CDC website mentions the cost of the vaccine as part of the agency’s deliberations, one of the groups invited to the meetings, The Keystone Center, received a letter which effectively says just that. In an article published in the Washington Examiner, Benjamin Domenech, a research fellow with The Heartland Institute, expresses concern that the CDC is using cost factors to delay recommendation of the vaccine. Mr. Domenech also worries that such cost-cutting tactics will be used in the future as the country begins to implement ObamaCare. It should be emphasized that this discussion is not part of the schedule on the CDC website—which leaves us to wonder: Why all the secrecy about these meetings, which have always been otherwise transparent?

Mr. Domenech writes:

The question that should concern parents is whether this listening tour will become part of an attempt to give the CDC cover for an unwise decision—based on dollars and cents, not quality of care—which would place an estimated 40,000 infants at risk over the next decade.

Whether this vaccine is added to the infant schedule or not, for ACIP not to at least partially recommend of [sic] a vaccine whose safety has been endorsed by the FDA makes for a dangerous precedent. It would result in a significant disincentive for vaccine makers in the future, and would be a sign that decisions about such vaccines will now be made by those with green eyeshades, not stethoscopes.

... And as one of the first major decisions made in the wake of the bogus controversy over autism and the measles mumps rubella (MMR) vaccine, this clumsy process runs the risk of catering to the anti-science fearmongers whose lies about vaccination risks have resulted in a return of preventable disease. It also could set a dangerous precedent about the decreasing value of human life.

As we have before, in the case of Avastin for breast cancer, ACSH decries the consideration of cost in decisions to endorse a treatment, especially a new vaccine for meningitis, says ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross. “This infection is, thankfully, uncommon — but devastating when it occurs. There’s just no reason, based on health concerns alone, for the CDC and the ACIP not to endorse it.”