

Dumb and dumber in disease prevention

By ACSH Staff — November 8, 2011

In a bizarre turn of events, some American parents are not only refusing to vaccinate their children against dangerous diseases, but they are actually actively trying to get their kids sick. Parents across various states are [sending and receiving live viruses](#) [1] in the mail, often from complete strangers, in a misguided attempt to give their children immunity via actual infection, without vaccinations.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom comments, This is wrong on so many levels that I'm left speechless. It's like pulling out all of your teeth so you won't get cavities.

Facebook groups, such as Find a Pox Party in Your Area, allow these anti-vaccine zealots to receive an infected child's personal items such as infected lollipops, wet rags, and clothing items to give to their own child in the hope that the disease would be passed on. Chickenpox (varicella) is the most commonly sent virus, although there are reports of parents searching for measles, mumps, and rubella.

Beyond the fact that intentionally sending a contagious pathogen through the mail is illegal, these parents also place their children at risk of serious complications that can arise from these diseases. For instance, chickenpox can lead to encephalitis or chickenpox pneumonia, both potentially lethal.

ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava comments, I think this is one of the more bizarre outcomes of the anti-vaccine movement. These parents are too young to have been witness to the havoc that these diseases can wreak, so they don't understand the real risks that they pose. They don't seem to ask themselves the question of why we have these vaccines in the first place; the answer is that these diseases are dangerous.

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross adds, It's true that there used to be a time decades ago when parents wanted their children to get chickenpox and other communicable children's diseases in order to avoid the higher risk that results from developing these illnesses as an adult. Contracting the disease at some point was all but certain and vaccines were non-existent then. But now that there are protective vaccines, parents can avoid exposing their children to the risks of the diseases in the first place. Despite the proven safety and efficacy of children's vaccines, some still insist on putting their children in harm's way, all in the name of avoiding imaginary vaccine-related illnesses, fighting the evil vaccine makers, and exposing their children to the virus the natural way.

ACSH advisor Dr. Chic Schissel is concerned that some parents believe that giving a child a disease is natural and organic. Such reasoning, he says, is too common these days, and bodes ill for the future of science in political agendas.

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2011/11/08/dumb-and-dumber-in-disease-prevention>

Links

[1] <http://www.kpho.com/story/15896021/cbs-5-investigates-mail-order-diseases>