

Alarming rise in measles cases

By ACSH Staff — June 6, 2012

Last year, the U.S. saw 222 measles cases the highest number since 1996, a statistic that public health officials are now using to [remind kids and adults to get vaccinated](#) [1]. And because 200 of the identified cases were imported from abroad and from countries one might not immediately associate with the disease, including France and Italy the latest warning is especially important to those traveling.

Further analysis of the U.S. measles cases revealed that 65 percent of those infected had not been vaccinated and of those who were not immunized or were unaware of their vaccination status, 85 percent were eligible to get the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. The worst part is, those who avoid getting the vaccine are putting not only themselves at greater risk of measles and other diseases, but they are also jeopardizing the health of infants who are too young to get the shot and thus rely on herd immunity to stay protected.

Though measles seems like a long-forgotten disease for many Americans, it continues to kill 164,000 people globally each year. In 2011 alone, France reported over 15,000 measles cases, while another 5,000-plus occurred in Italy. The infectious disease community is thus advising that all travelers get vaccinated at least 2 weeks prior to their trip.

According to the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Physicians, people of all ages should have the MMR vaccine. And though it is routinely given to children at one year of age and again in kindergarten in the U.S., parents in some states are allowed to get around the vaccine by way of so-called philosophical exemptions.

These troubling data are not about cholera in Africa but measles in Europe! How tragic and unnecessary, ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross observes. Unfortunately, vaccine fears spiked, especially in Europe, after Dr. Andrew Wakefield's study linking the shot to autism was published in 1998, says Dr. Ross. And while the study has since been thoroughly discredited, and Dr. Wakefield has formally been accused of falsifying data, some parents are still wary of vaccines. They must be educated to realize that avoiding these shots is only putting their child and the entire community into that much more danger.

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