New anti-vaccine trend could be deadly

By ACSH Staff — August 15, 2013

Childhood contagions, such as measles, polio, meningitis and pertussis (whooping cough) can threaten the lives of people from all economic backgrounds. But despite the overwhelming evidence backing the safety and efficacy of vaccinations, people in the upper socioeconomic strata of our society seem to be hopping on the anti-vaccine bandwagon at an alarming rate. With percentages of vaccination exemptions increasing in affluent towns across the country, we have to wonder: is anti-vaccination the new in thing?

The anti-vaccination movement’s prominent voices in pop culture, such as Jenny McCarthy, RFK Jr. and Bill Maher might have something to do with it. The actress just got a spot on The View and has long used her social platform to preach anti-vax rhetoric. According to Nina Shapiro, a professor at UCLA medical school, It’s a little bit cool, it’s a little bit of a trend. It’s that whole natural, BPA-free, hybrid car community that says we’re not going to put chemicals in our children.

Almost all states (except MS and WV) allow religious exemption, and all do allow for medical exemptions. However 19 states, including California and Colorado, allow parents to opt out of having their children vaccinated under the so-called philosophical exemption, which means anything the parent wants it to.

In Southern California, the rate of exemption is particularly high. Take for example a public school in Malibu where only 58 percent of the students are immunized. In some of Los Angeles private schools, as few as 20 percent of students are vaccinated. In Ashland, Ore., and Boulder, Colo., close to 30 percent of children are exempt from vaccinations.

But the fact is that opting out of vaccinations does not only affect those who choose not to get vaccinated. According to Dr. Paul Offit, a pediatrician and vaccine expert at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and ACSH trustee, the new data from the Centers for Disease Control shows alarming levels of children who are not getting vaccines. For the first time ever, there are a handful of states which now have people who are choosing not to get vaccines at the greater than five percent level, which is a problem. That’s where you’re going to start to see some of these diseases coming back Offit said.

ACSH’s Dr. Elizabeth Whelan added this perspective: The parents who avoid vaccinating their kids
are being swayed by nonsense and agenda-driven anti-vaccine crusaders. The harm that will surely follow will however befall not only their unprotected children, but those kids classmates and the elderly grandparents who will fall victim to the childhood viruses that could easily have been prevented. Why this bizarre perversion of public health has taken root among the wealthier areas is a puzzle that hopefully can be reversed.

Links
[4] http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6230a3.htm?s_cid=mm6230a3_w