

Anti-vaccination movement allowing old infections to resurface

By ACSH Staff — April 8, 2014



Measles is a highly contagious viral infection that once

burdened an average 53,000 people in the United States. As of 2000, officials had declared the infection entirely eradicated in our nation. This year, however, measles infections are projected to outnumber 2009 infection rates by three-fold. Dr. Anne Schuchat, Director of Immunizations and Respiratory diseases at the Center for Disease Control says, "We really don't want a child to die from measles, but it's almost inevitable.

The anti-vaccine movement is spreading to communities across the nation, dismantling our defenses against once defeated diseases. A wide range of opposition has lent the movement great momentum: the debunked idea that vaccines cause autism, distrust of the federal government and pharmaceutical industry, celebrity spokespeople perceived to know what they're talking about, as well as religious and philosophical concerns. The impact of these mixed messages can be seen with the recent measles outbreaks in New York, California, and Texas.

Unvaccinated children are left susceptible to disease from people traveling into the United States from areas with endemic infectious agents. According to Dr. Schuchat, this is the most common culprit in measles cases. The newly-infected then spread the disease within their communities. It is necessary for populations, neighborhoods, to maintain high vaccination rates to protect unvaccinated people (lowering the level of infectious disease in the community) a phenomenon known as herd immunity, says Alan Hinman, a senior public health scientist at the Task Force for Global Health.

[USA Today](#) ^[1] details some examples of the devastating toll of the anti-vaccination movement, profiling three specific cases. Of note is 7-month old, Olivia, who first visited a San Diego emergency room with her father, who was being treated for an ingrown toenail. She returned two weeks later with measles, contracted in the same emergency room. Olivia has since recovered, but her mother adds, "We are blessed because she didn't end up with any complications. If the

wrong person is in the wrong place, that happens."

Low community vaccination rates turns safe environments into hotspots of infection, endangering those who are unable to receive vaccination. Most commonly this group includes young infants, immune-compromised children, and individuals receiving special medical treatment. Dr. Paul Offit, Chief of Infectious Disease at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and ACSH trustee, affirms that "People assume this will never happen to them until it happens to them. It's a shame that's the way we have to learn the lesson. There's a human price for that lesson." Read more [here](#) [1].

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