A big shout out to Brandon Bisceglia on Science 2.0 writing about Dr. Paul Offit and the anti-vaccine movement

By ACSH Staff — May 1, 2014

Although he is still a still a journalism student at the University of New Haven, Brandon Bisceglia’s op-ed on the Science 2.0 website is dead on, and well worth the read.

He begins, Philadelphia was under attack through the winter and spring of 1991. The name of the enemy? Measles. The Philadelphia outbreak the city’s first since 1954 - began in October 1990, and quickly spread throughout the unvaccinated population. Within six months, 938 cases of the highly contagious disease had been reported to the city’s health department.

What caused this huge outbreak? It was the Faith Tabernacle Congregation and the First Century Gospel Church, where 486 members more than half of those who were unvaccinated came down with measles.

ACSH trustee Dr. Paul Offit, who was (and still is) at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia treated a number of the sick children, and this event was instrumental in beginning his long and continuing fight to combat the nonstop parade of anti vaccination campaigns that still continues today.

Offit had quite a job ahead of him. According to Bisceglia, The Rev. Charles Reinert of Faith Tabernacle told the Philadelphia Inquirer in February, after four children from his church had already died, "We do not believe that our children are neglected or abused whatsoever by our trusting God. We believe the healing power of our Almighty God is far superior to any care a man could offer."

It would seem that the Reverend miscalculated a bit.

Although the fight has been long and difficult, but Offit and Bisceglia believe that some progress is being made.

Vaccine uptake remains high overall, and people generally trust their doctors. When people get
sick, they go to a doctor, not to Jenny McCarthy, [Offit] said.