

ACSH Trustee Dr. Paul Offit in the WSJ on Anti-Vaccination Foolishness

By ACSH Staff — September 25, 2014



We at ACSH have always considered ourselves to be honored

to have a man such as Dr. Paul Offit on our board of trustees. His fierce commitment to public health, as well as his astonishing contributions to vaccine research makes him nothing short of a hero to our organization, and many others.

Dr. Offit's superb September 24th *Wall Street Journal* [op-ed](#) [1], entitled *The Anti-Vaccination Epidemic* provides further evidence of the enormous influence and contribution to public health that he has made.

Dr. Offit, who is a professor of pediatrics in the division of infectious diseases and director of the Vaccine Education Center at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, has not only been a staunch supporter of vaccination, but he is also one of the inventors of RotaTeq one of the two rotavirus vaccines that have been responsible for [saving hundreds of thousands of lives](#) [2] in poor countries, where the absence of rehydration care can turn diarrhea into a fatal disease.

In his new op-ed, Dr. Offit discusses a topic that we at ACSH are all too familiar with the re-emergence of previously tamed, preventable infectious diseases because of a persistent anti-vaccination misguided mentality. Mostly he focuses on the return of pertussis (whooping cough).

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom says, It is appalling that infectious diseases that were essentially wiped out not long ago are now returning. The mentality behind the anti-vaccination movement is irrational and causes great harm. This year, there have already been 8,000 cases of pertussis that have been reported in California alone. This is obscene. That number should be closer to zero.

It is perhaps counterintuitive that the areas where vaccination rates are low are wealthy, not poor. Offit explains, The area with the most cases of whooping cough in California is Los Angeles County, and no group within that county has lower immunization rates than residents living between Malibu and Marina Del Ray, home to some of the wealthiest and most exclusive suburbs in the country.

And one fact especially stands out, if only for its perversity. At the Kabbalah Children's Academy in Beverly Hills, 57% of children are unvaccinated. At the Waldorf Early Childhood Center in Santa

Monica, it's 68%.

This is nothing short of jaw dropping since These are the kind of immunization rates that can be found in Chad or South Sudan. But parents in Beverly Hills and Santa Monica see vaccines as unnatural something that conflicts with their healthy lifestyle. And they have no problem finding fringe pediatricians willing to cater to their irrational beliefs.

Other disturbing facts from the piece include:

- Between 2009 and 2010 more than 3,500 cases of mumps were reported in New York City and surrounding area.
- In the first half of 2012, Washington suffered 2,520 cases of whooping cough, a 1,300% increase from the previous year and the largest outbreak in the state since 1942.
- As of Aug. 29, about 600 cases of measles have occurred in the U.S. in 2014: the largest outbreak in 20 years in a country that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention declared measles-free in 2000.
- Children not vaccinated against whooping cough are 24 times more likely to catch the disease.
- The anti-vaccination movement is not limited to the US. Japan, had virtually eliminated whooping cough by 1974, however due to the anti-vaccination movement there, in 1979, more than 13,000 cases of whooping cough and 41 deaths occurred as a result.

Dr. Offit, as we have done many times, points out what is perhaps the single biggest contributor to this trend Andrew Wakefield (formerly Dr. Andrew Wakefield), whose 1998 phony study linked the MMR vaccine to autism. Despite [overwhelming evidence of fraud](#) [3], this made-up scare continues to do damage to this day.

He concludes, Because we're unwilling to learn from history, we are starting to relive it. And children are the victims of our ignorance. An ignorance that, ironically, is cloaked in education, wealth, and privilege.

Bravo.

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