

AMA calls for removal of non-medical vaccine exemptions

By ACSH Staff — June 9, 2015



The American Medical Association (AMA) the largest

association of physicians in the United States has called for an end to non-medical exemptions for vaccinations. They argued that there is no scientific basis for non-medical (philosophical or religious) exemptions and these exemptions put the public's health at risk. AMA doctors also say that parents are misinformed about superstition-based vaccination risks, such as the fear that vaccines cause autism (they don't.)

Many AMA doctors criticized a new joint report authored by the AMA's Council on Science and Public Health (CSAPH) and the Council of Ethical and Judicial Affairs (CEJA) saying that it made it too easy to claim exemptions. They argued that it weakens present AMA policy, which encourages removal of non-medical exemptions.

As evident from the recent measles outbreak at Disneyland, protecting community health in today's mobile society requires that policymakers not permit individuals from opting out of immunization solely as a matter of personal preference or convenience, [said Dr. Patrice Harris](#) ^[1], an AMA board member. When people are immunized they also help prevent the spread of disease to others.

Disneyland's home in California is among 19 states that allow for personal belief exemptions. Forty-eight states allow religious exemptions. AMA physicians argue that these exemptions are becoming progressively easier to obtain, and have doubled over the past 20 years. A vaccination rate of around 90 percent is needed to achieve herd immunity (also known as community immunity, the level at which epidemic spread is impeded even among the unvaccinated), and vaccine exemptions are causing many counties to fall far below the necessary vaccination coverage. (For example, last fall we wrote about schools in West Hollywood that had vaccination rates [as low as 65 percent](#) ^[2].)

"The public will always make their own decisions, but it's the duty of the AMA to make a strong

public statement," [said Douglas R. Myers, MD](#) ^[3], of Washington. "I think it's our duty to come out with a clear and concise statement."

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2015/06/09/ama-calls-for-removal-of-non-medical-vaccine-exemptions>

Links

[1] <http://www.forbes.com/sites/brucejapsen/2015/06/08/ama-end-personal-religious-vaccination-exemptions/>

[2] <http://acsh.org/2014/09/vaccination-rates-incredibly-low-affluent-hollywood-schools/>

[3] <http://www.medpagetoday.com/MeetingCoverage/AMA/52000>