

This isn't just a public health crisis. It's a public sanity one.



By Frank Bruni

Opinion Columnist

March 9, 2019

How many studies do you have to throw at the vaccine hysterics before they quit? How much of a scientific consensus, how many unimpeachable experts and how exquisitely rational an argument must you present?

That's a trick question, of course. There's no magic number. There's no number, period. And that's because the anti-vaccine crowd (or anti-vaxxers) aren't trafficking in anything as concrete, mundane and quaint as facts. They're not really engaged in a debate about medicine. They're immersed in a world of conspiracies, in the dark shadows where no data can be trusted, nothing is what it seems and those who buy the party line are pitiable sheep.

And, boy, are they living at the right time, when so much information and misinformation swirl by so quickly that it's easy to confuse the two and even easier to grab hold and convince yourself of whatever it is you *prefer* to believe. With Google searches, you find the ostensible proof you seek. On social media, you bask in all the affirmation you could possibly want.

The parents who are worried or sure about grave risks from vaccines reflect a broader horror that has flickered or flared in everything from the birther movement to "Pizzagate," that nonsense about children as Democratic sex slaves in the imagined basement of a Washington

pizza joint. Their recklessness and the attendant re-emergence of measles aren't just a public health crisis. They're a public sanity one, emblematic of too many people's willful disregard of evidence, proud suspicion of expertise and estrangement from reason.

Show Full Article

