

Thoughts on The Lyme vaccine: a cautionary tale

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Although it is common (and usually accurate) to describe John Q. Public as exceedingly dense, I believe this is not the defining characteristic. Rather it is laziness, defined by a complete acceptance of whatever they are told (so long as it does not disrupt them personally). As Marcuse said in *One Dimensional Man*, "A comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization, a token of technical progress". This paper highlights the downfall of the Lyme disease vaccine, LYMERix (probably the best vaccine name to date). Although extensive testing and vaccine surveillance found largely no problems with the vaccine (there might be rare genetic that led to arthritic problems), anecdotal evidence led to its downfall. Led by some 'victims' and their stories (a total of 59/1,400,000 vaccinations results in claims of arthritic problems) an anti-vaccination movement started and a law firm filed suit. When all was said and done, the safety of the vaccine was reaffirmed, the law company made millions (with the 'victims' getting nothing) and the vaccine was pulled for low sales.

As this paper (indirectly) highlights, the problem in this case was not the American public's outlandish stupidity, but their sheer laziness especially when it comes to informing themselves. In matter of critical importance to individual personal health, people relied only on the 5 minutes of cable news they watched when they got home from work and looked no further, looking for no more rigorous or reliable information. Believing *post hoc ergo propter hoc* not because of a lack of intelligence but simply because it was easier and required less work than doing research of their own.

This important lesson that needs to be learned by the scientific establishment is that outside of their educated circles, the same rules do not apply (something politicians learned many years ago). Things that would fail peer review will excel in the public's mind. While we can certainly try to change this situation, until such a time occurs, scientists have no other option but to play the game.