**Should children be routinely immunized?**

A contentious issue that is on the rise currently is whether immunization should be

mandatory for children or not. While the answer might seem very obvious at first, a

further in-depth look at various sources concludes that it is more than just a simple

black-and-white issue. In fact, the very concept of immunization causes protests from

Religious groups and affiliations, believing that it is not in accordance with their beliefs.

There are also parents and teachers who question the safety/efficacy of vaccines, as

well as the lack of personal choice in the matter. Academic and Medical sources on the

other hand, such as physicians, doctors, and health organizations cite the effectiveness,

prevention and eradication of certain diseases as proof that immunization is more

beneficial than harmful. These two parties remain quite strong on their beliefs on what is

right and wrong for their children.

Proponents of immunization support their claim by citing the success stories of various

immunization campaigns: “*In the 1920s, Diphtheria was a common childhood disease in*

*the US; Today it is rare for a doctor even to see a case of diphtheria.” “Smallpox was*

*one of the devastating diseases the world has ever known. Now smallpox is wiped out –*

*gone from the Earth forever.*”[[1]](#endnote-2)

In addition, they maintain the possibility of death if an unvaccinated child encounters

that disease later in life. They also state the relative safety, effectiveness (90 – 99%

immunity) and low cost as additional reasons for children to be vaccinated.

Opponents of immunization cite facts and documents relating to the ineffectiveness and

danger of vaccines: “*In the UK between 1970 and 1990, over 200,000 cases of*

*whooping cough occurred in fully vaccinated children.” “In 1978, a survey of 30 States in*

*the US revealed that more than half of the children who contracted measles had been*

*adequately vaccinated.”[[2]](#endnote-3)*

They also state that immunization is unnatural and needless because of human

evolution and better living conditions, and the various side-effects of vaccines, including

deaths. A Mr. Peter Morell in particular, noted that “*In truth, every major infection for*

*which vaccines exist was originally in massive decline before a single vaccine was*

*introduced*.” And that “*Much of the medical rhetoric on this subject is rooted in beliefs*”[[3]](#endnote-4).

The contending party was quick to respond to some of these issues. To address Mr.

Morell’s concern (as well as many other parents), they looked at the experiences of

several developed countries that let their immunization levels drop (UK, Sweden,

Japan) and noted that drops in vaccination rates were followed by epidemics and an

increase in cases, commenting that “*The effect was dramatic and immediate*”.

To the concern that many immunized people have been getting diseases, they

countered that “*Most routine childhood vaccines have efficacy in the 85-90% range”[[4]](#endnote-5)*

and gave an example that showed the 10% unprotected by the vaccine outnumbering

those that have not been vaccinated, resulting in a statistic that would give rise to this

concern.

To the issue of vaccines causing side effects, they attributed serious cases such as

deaths to be caused by chance alone, and maintained that there is little to no evidence

linking such cases to the vaccine. Such evidence might be only coincidental.

Given the great length and scope of the topic, it is unclear whether either side will

concur to the other. It is certain that as long as diseases exist, vaccines will exist, and

thus such debates will inevitably continue; reflecting on the ethical, safety, efficacy and

moral aspects of the matter. Should children be routinely immunized? Only time will tell.

1. Quoted from MedicineNet.com [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. Quoted from Vaccinationdebate.com [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. From a letter in response to an editorial in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. From Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Ottawa and Atlanta.

   **Bibliography:**

   Morrell, Peter. *eLetters: Vaccination: the Wider Picture.* Canadian Medical Association Journal. October 13, 2000.

   <http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/201/300/cdn_medical_association/cmaj/vol-163/issue-7/10-13.htm>.

   *Vaccinations: Refuting the Refusals.* Canadian Medical Association Journal. 2000. <http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/201/300/cdn_medical_association/cmaj/vol-163/issue-7/0801.htm>.

   Questions, Issues, and Answers

   <http://www.utoronto.ca/kids/vaccine.htm>

   The ineffectiveness of vaccines

   <http://www.vaccinationdebate.com/web2.html>

   The success of vaccines

   http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=21429 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)