



PEDIATRIC HEALTH

Vaccines & Autism (Part 1)

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

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It turns out chronic inflammation is the driver of autism expression. Unfortunately, those who emotionally embrace the vaccine issue rarely, if ever, consider this relationship, which hinders a rational view of the vaccine issue.

In this article, I outline the players that dominate the vaccine debate and in a follow-up article, I will describe the autism-chronic inflammation connection.

Until writing this article, I had not participated at all in the vaccination debate that has gone on within my profession. In particular, the autism issue is an emotional topic and for me personally, the data are difficult to decipher.

My observational experience is that most people who are vaccinated do not get autism. Additionally, I have met many people who have not been vaccinated and none has developed the diseases vaccines are supposed to prevent.

I have no personal experience witnessing a child regress into autism in a timeline associated with vaccination. I can only imagine how devastating it must be to witness this correlation, and if I were to witness the regression personally, it would make me question the safety of vaccines.

Upon looking further, I would undoubtedly come across the evidence that autism is more prevalent now compared to previous generations. The CDC says one in 68 children are in the spectrum, while in the 1970s-80s, only one in 2,000 suffered, according to WebMD. I would then come across the debate among doctors, scientists and parents, and would subsequently be confronted by a problem: The debate is rigidly positioned as pro-vax and anti-vax. Which do I decide upon, since I only have two choices?

While this is not remotely a comedic topic, it is, however, quite true that comedians often provide accurate commentaries on our social and political environment. George Carlin once said that when

it comes to meaningless things like ice cream and donuts, we are given dozens of choices, but when it comes to important issues like voting, the choices presented to us are left versus right, and neither platform or candidate is typically very appealing.



Similar is the situation with vaccines: The choices are pro-vax or anti-vax, presented in a rigid, fundamentalist fashion. Let's outline these two positions and a less aggressive, objectivist position.

The Authoritarians

In my experience, when I hear/see the words of pro-vaxers, I feel like an institutionalized authoritarian is lecturing at me, which is why I refer to them as authoritarians. They have no patience for anyone who questions the "validity" of vaccines. They believe everyone should be vaccinated and there are absolutely no significant health concerns at all. In general, authoritarians defend "positions" of the group and have little interest in evidence. Their authority is the evidence.¹

When someone questions authority, especially when it is an intolerant, elitist, establishment view, the individual is typically labeled a conspiracy theorist. Vaccine authoritarians use this type of labeling against those who are overtly, or appear to be, anti-vaxers. Perle states that if you oppose vaccines, it is because you are one or more of the following:¹

- Anti-government
- Anti-medicine
- Anti-science

First, calling someone a conspiracy theorist, or labeling them anti-XYZ, leads to an immediate stifling of debate. Second, such name calling by authoritarians inhibits the authoritarian from actually considering evidence that may support a view contrary to their own, which they allegedly espouse to invite.¹

In other words, the authoritarians call for evidence, but really have little interest in evidence that goes against the authoritarian position and its related bureaucratic system. I say this because an abundance of readily available evidence [to be presented in a follow-up article] suggests an autism-prone phenotype exists, such that a tempered view about vaccines and autism is more appropriate than a pro-vax authoritarian view for which there is little evidence.

The Radicals

The anti-vaxers strike me as fundamentalist radicals who believe vaccines are catastrophic for all and that no one should be vaccinated ... ever; and that vaccines should be feared like the plague. The anti-vaxers have identified there are likely to be legitimate associations between vaccines and regression into the autistic spectrum, which is then taken to the extreme and leads to an untenable argument that vaccines injure all infants.

The outcome is that anti-vaxers appear as dogmatic as the authoritarians with the opposite position. Anti-vaxers focus solely on vaccines as the cause of the problem, rather than considering the multiple factors that render an infant susceptible to developing autism. Not considering susceptibility factors creates a mindset no different from the authoritarians.

The Objectivist View

From my perspective, an objectivist view can lead to a position that could be reasonably favorable or unfavorable toward vaccines and vaccine policy. Tim Perenich, DC, recently wrote two articles that put forth an objectivist view, wherein he rationally presents an unfavorable view of vaccines.^{2,3} Perenich outlines that there is important evidence not being considered by the authoritarians and radicals, and in my opinion, this is because of the emotion these two groups create.

The Chronic Inflammation Link

My focus when looking into this topic was to see if there is evidence to support the existence of an unemotional metric that can allow a practical way to assess the vaccination-autism issue. My impression is that an autism-prone phenotype exists and that vaccines can be the final stressor initiating the expression of autism. I will outline this chronic inflammation view of vaccination next issue.

References

1. Perle SM. "The Case for Vaccination." *Chiropractic Economics*, July 20, 2017.
2. Perenich T. "Vaccines and Chiropractic: Evidence-Based Medicine or Medical Dogma?" *Dynamic Chiropractic*, Aug. 15, 2014.
3. Perenich T. "The Case Against Vaccination." *Chiropractic Economics*, July 20, 2017.

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