Vaccine Wars - Frontline

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**Introduction**

The most terrible sight for a parent is to see their child lose their life due to a disease. Each year thousands of children meet their dreadful fate due to multiple diseases. Some of these diseases are caused by bacteria and some are caused by viruses of different types. The weaker immune system among the children makes them susceptible to different diseases (Offit, 2015). The reason for a weaker immune system is that they are yet to develop immunities for diseases (Offit, 2015). Hence, the need for vaccination arise. Many diseases that once killed thousands of children are nowhere to be seen due to different vaccinations. Diseases like smallpox, diphtheria, and polio have almost been eliminated from the face of the earth. Due to the prevalence of some diseases in some countries, there is a dire need for administering the vaccination to the children (Offit, 2015). Reason being that any unimmunized child entering from a disease-stricken country can be a source of an outbreak of diseases that have not been seen since a generation. However, there is paranoia among parents on the issue of vaccination. Even the most educated of parents have been reported to refuse to administer the vaccination to their children. Some parents believe that vaccination contains harmful substances that cause numerous illnesses in children. Another section of the parents' community holds the view that it is their personal belief on the issue of vaccination. Their belief has been respected by the state and legislation to not to administer vaccination due to personal belief has been enacted. Some parents argue that there is a medical establishment working behind the idea of vaccination. They seem to analyze this issue from purely the perspective of financial capital. Furthermore, some parents became paranoid after viewing multiple videos on social platforms aimed to spread misinformation. The situation is further exacerbated when celebrities jump on the bandwagon against the vaccines and spark a widespread fear among the general public.

**Discussion**

Paul Offit, an American pediatrician known as the co-inventor of rotavirus vaccine, claims that the vaccination has increased the life span of an American citizen by 30 years (Offit, 2015). Additionally, he claimed that most of the diseases that were once widely found in the United States are nowhere to be seen. According to Paul Offit, this can be a reason for parents to refuse to administer a vaccine to their children. With the last case of poliovirus appearing some 40 years ago, some young parents who have not witnessed an outbreak of disease consider vaccines to be redundant and they do not serve any purpose (Offit, 2015). Paul Offit suggests that there is little room for complacency and parents must shed their rigidity regarding vaccines.

On the other hand, Paul Offit, when asked about the millions of dollars he made from the profits on vaccines he co-invented, claimed that the vaccines have served their purpose. The vaccine that was invented to ease the sufferings of parents seeing their child die due to rotavirus has served its purpose. This argument is further cemented when there is no case recorded of the rotavirus in the United States for more than a generation.

The hesitancy and refusal of parents towards vaccines are understandable. The parents were forced to think of vaccines as a harmful object through an organized campaign. In the year 1988, Andrew Wakefield, a notorious British doctor, published papers against vaccines (Godlee, Smith & Marcovitch, 2011). The Wakefield papers claimed that surging Autism among the children is caused by the MMR vaccine (Godlee, Smith & Marcovitch, 2011). MMR vaccines are used to immunize the children against measles, mumps, and rubella (Godlee, Smith & Marcovitch, 2011). Following his footsteps, numerous other medical researchers published papers claiming that Autism has been caused by the MMR vaccine (Godlee, Smith & Marcovitch, 2011). This certification from well know medicine practitioners compelled parents to reject vaccination. Parents of Autistic children came forward pleading that their children have been diagnosed with Autism after getting the MMR vaccine. Additionally, some celebrities also came forward against the vaccines. As a result of a powerful campaign against the vaccines, anti-vaccine advocates were successful in forcing the state to notify the establishment of a vaccine settlement court. This implied that the state is willing to compensate parents whose children have contracted diseases after getting vaccinated. In some states, numerous legislations were passed, enshrining parents with the right not to administer vaccination due to certain personal beliefs. However, the bubble of Wakefield papers was burst when the publisher himself backtracked on his research, claiming that the papers were published with ill intentions to derail vaccination campaigns across the world (Godlee, Smith & Marcovitch, 2011). Additionally, Wakefield accepted that the children for his study were recommended by a lawyer suing some pharmaceutical companies (Godlee, Smith & Marcovitch, 2011). Hence, there was a sigh relief all over the world following the denunciation of Wakefield papers.

**Conclusion**

There appears to be only a logical conclusion surrounding the contentious debate of vaccination. For instance, the notion some parents claiming their children became Autistic was successfully debunked by Danish medicine practitioners. The Danish medicine practitioners claimed that they found no evidence that supported the hypothesis of children becoming Autistic after vaccination. Additionally, Danish medicine practitioners rejected the hypothesis that Thimersol caused Autism among the children. The analyzed the health history of the children vaccinated before and after 1992. 1992 was the year when the amount of Thimersol was decreased in vaccines. Danish medicine practitioners found there was an equal number of Autistic children before and after 1992. Additionally, medical practitioners in Japan suggested changing the vaccination routine. This too proved to be a presumptuous proposition. Reason being that the number of Autistic children surged instead of decreasing. This only goes to show that the case is scientifically settled and the role of vaccines in immunizing the children cannot be understated.

**References**

Godlee, F., Smith, J., & Marcovitch, H. (2011). Wakefield’s article linking MMR vaccine and autism was fraudulent.

Offit, P. A. (2015). *Deadly choices: How the anti-vaccine movement threatens us all*. Basic Books (AZ).