

## **Autism Study Finds Vaccine Risk**

**Lyle Loughry, December, 2007**

A recent, privately funded survey finds vaccinated US children have a significantly higher risk of neurological disorders -- including autism -- than unvaccinated children. The survey conducted by SurveyUSA, a respected marketing firm, was commissioned by Generation Rescue, an advocacy group, and cost \$200,000.

"No one has ever compared prevalence rates of these neurological disorders between vaccinated and unvaccinated children," said J. B. Handley, father of a child with autism and co-founder of Generation Rescue. **The US autism rate is 1 in 150 children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.** Handley said that his organization believes that mercury, including a type used for decades in routine childhood immunizations, is a major factor in the ten-fold increase in reported autism cases over the past 20 years.

The telephone survey of parents representing a total of 17,000 children appears to be the first of its kind -- and contrasts starkly with several government-backed studies that have found no risk from vaccines. In one striking finding, vaccinated boys 11-17 were more than twice as likely to have autism as their never-vaccinated counterparts. Handley said, "The phone survey isn't perfect, but these numbers point to the need for a comprehensive national study to gather this critical information. Unvaccinated children weren't nearly so difficult to locate as we had been led to believe, according to Handley. "We were able to find more than enough in our sample of more than 17,000 children to establish confidence intervals at or above 95 percent for the primary comparisons we made."

Concern that vaccines are linked to the rise of autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders has been largely dismissed by public health officials and mainstream medical groups, especially since a 2004 report by the respected Institute of Medicine found no such evidence -- and suggested research money go to more "promising" areas. The official CDC position, as offered by Curtis Allen, an official CDC spokesman, is that they continue to recommend the childhood immunization schedule, and that previous studies involving hundreds of thousands of children have failed to find an association between vaccines and autism. The spokesman also noted that "self-report surveys on topics like this often have significant limitations, so one must be cautious with respect to interpreting the findings," but also noted, "it's important to recognize that the agency has not seen the Generation Rescue

data, and that we look forward to learning more about the survey."

The survey took its cue from the CDC's own phone-survey approach to estimating the incidence of such disorders among American children. According to Handley, "Listening to the CDC talk about the reliability of parent reporting, we thought there's a quick way to get a proxy for whether or not there's any truth to the hypotheses that vaccines and all these neurological disorders are related," Handley said the survey, conducted in nine counties in Oregon and California, asked parents "whether their child had been vaccinated, and whether that child had one or more of the following diagnoses: attention deficit disorder, ADHD, Asperger's syndrome, Pervasive Development Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified, or autism."

### **Results highlighted by Generation Rescue:**

Among more than 9,000 boys age 4-17, vaccinated boys were 2.5 times (155 percent) more likely to have neurological disorders, 224 percent more likely to have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and 61 percent more likely to have autism. For older vaccinated boys in the 11-17 age bracket, the results were even more pronounced. Vaccinated boys were 158 percent more likely to have a neurological disorder, 317 percent more likely to have ADHD, and 112 percent more likely to have autism. Handley said he believes the higher results for the older boys are probably more complete because not every child in the younger age group would have received a formal diagnosis. Full results of the study are at [generationrescue.org](http://generationrescue.org).

According to US Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., "Generation Rescue's study is impressive and forcefully raises some serious questions about the relationship between vaccines and autism. What is ultimately needed to resolve this issue one way or the other is a comprehensive national study of vaccinated and unvaccinated children. The parents behind Generation Rescue only want information. These parents deserve more than roadblocks, they deserve answers. We can and should move forward in search of those answers." Maloney has reintroduced a bill first submitted last year calling for the National Institutes of Health to conduct such a study. Two years ago CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding told UPI that "such studies could and should be done" but offered several reasons why they might prove difficult, including the variability of autism diagnoses, possible genetic differences in the Amish and the small number of never-vaccinated children in the United States. "They haven't lifted a penny since then," Handley said. Parents -- some of whom say they watched their children regress into autism immediately following physical reactions to vaccines -- have continued to press the issue.

In June, 2007, the **Autism - MMR vaccine controversy had it's day in court. A**

**test case in an American court could in one way or another settle the debate on the possible link between autism and childhood vaccines.** In an unprecedented legal challenge in a special court in Washington, the Court of Federal Claims, the case of a girl from Arizona, is the first of several to be heard of more than 4,800 cases. The cases have been filed by parents who believe their children's autism was caused by a mercury preservative in the vaccines. Michelle Cedillo, a 12-year-old, suffers from a plethora of health problems, including severe autism, inflammatory bowel disease, glaucoma and epilepsy which her parents believe are the result of the MMR vaccine she was given at 15 months.

The parents want compensation from the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program, a no-fault system with a **\$2.5 billion fund** made up from a 75-cent-per-dose tax on vaccines. The National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act of 1986 (P.L. 99-660) established the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP). The VICP, which went into effect in 1988. This program provides compensation to children who have serious adverse effects from any childhood vaccine. The compensation covers medical and related expenses, lost future income, and up to \$250,000 for pain and suffering. The funding for paying successful claims regarding vaccines administered before 1988 came from the US Treasury. The VICP trust fund currently contains more than \$2 billion. About 7000 claims have been filed for adverse effects other than autism, and so far about 2000 have resulted in compensation, in amounts averaging about \$850,000. Approximately 700 claims remain unresolved, since the VICP frequently takes more than 2 years to process a petition.

Since its inception, the VICP has been a key component in stabilizing the US vaccine market by providing liability protection to both vaccine manufacturers and providers, by encouraging research and development of new and safer vaccines, and by providing for a more streamlined and less adversarial alternative to the traditional tort system for resolving vaccine injury claims.

This first test case will question whether the combination measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, plus a mercury-containing preservative called thimerosal, caused Michelle's autism. As vaccine experts point out, parents often link vaccines with their children's symptoms because vaccinations can be upsetting, and children are vaccinated at an age when autism and related disorders often first appear. A solid body of scientific evidence challenges the parents cases and medical experts and the Government have repeatedly assured parents that the MMR vaccine is safe, but controversial research by Dr. Andrew Wakefield published in The Lancet in 1998, linking the MMR vaccine with autism and bowel diseases has fueled the cause and public confidence appears to have been affected.

For additional information on the subject of vaccines, see **The Truth About Vaccines** on the **Recorded Interviews** section on this website.