

Parents don't know who to trust on Vaccinations Contd.

From: [Sheri Nakken](#)

http://pittsburghlive.com/x/style/family/familyville/s_325441.html

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Comments about getting kids vaccinated draw hurrahs, hostility

By Anne Michaud

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This week has left me feeling as though I stuck my hat up over the fence during an old Western gun fight and had it shot out of my hands. There are some heated opinions on vaccines, to say the least. Four people wrote to tell me about their loved ones who have been harmed by vaccinations. Two doctors called me a quack. One lady says her puppies' vaccinations are too expensive. Another MD likened mandatory immunization to genocide. As I say, it's been quite a week.

I'm not among the puppy advocates or genocide theorists. In fact, I thought the point of last week's column 'Parents don't know who to trust on vaccinations'

http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/style/family/familyville/s_322897.html was quite tame. While fears exist about the consequences of vaccination, I said, parents ought to have a choice about whether to have their children vaccinated.

With something like the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) shot, which some groups believe can cause autism, parents ought to be able to decline until medical science catches up and convinces us it's safe. The Hepatitis B vaccine, for which the chances of contracting it are about the same as the risk of harm from the shot, should also be suspect until scientists can make the case better.

The response to last week's column that gave me the most pause was from the NNii, the National Network for Immunization Information. This is a reputable organization, and it says that microbes that cause the diseases we think of as ancient - polio and smallpox - still exist and can recur if we fail to maintain high levels of immunization. Fair enough.

Dr. Martin Myers, executive director of the NNii, also chided me for saying his organization is naive. I was maybe a little sloppy in my language. What I meant to say is that it is naive for medical professionals to keep patting parents on the head and telling us it will all be OK, science is in the house.

I say that transparency builds trust. If the federal government were to publish the vaccine risk assessment database known as the Vaccine Safety

Datalink, that would go a long way toward giving parents the information we believe we need to make informed decisions. Instead, government officials are hiding behind privacy concerns.

We are an informed citizenry, thanks largely to the Internet, and groups like NNii should come to grips with that reality. That's what I mean by naive, naive in the sense of poorly understanding public relations.

Another response I received, and of a kind I cannot abide, is the personal attack. This is pure defensiveness, designed to intimidate and belittle. The authors, in two cases, in no way want to argue the facts or to enlighten. They just want to shut me up.

This from a Cranberry Township pediatrician: "You do not 'write on family and parenting issues,' you simply disseminate inflammatory rhetoric. You are irresponsible (SIC). Familyville would be better served if you quit your present job and, instead, stick to fiction writing."

Um, Doc, I'm really bad at fiction. Please don't make me go there! My family would starve.

Medical professionals who cannot defend their treatments in rational, non-insulting ways to the average parent should not be practicing pediatrics.

Another doctor says he sees that I cannot grasp the scientific method and that he feels sorry for me. Is this arrogant, or what? Doc, please see the above.

Here's what some other people had to say: "Thank you, Anne, for speaking up about vaccinations." "Wow! As the husband of an immunization nurse that was permanently injured by a 'safe and effective' Hepatitis B vaccine, I applaud your article." "I do not wish for my family, or myself, to be fully immunized ... through my personal research, I find the benefits do not outweigh the risks. I was very excited to read what you had to say."

Healthychild.com requested permission to reprint last week's column on its Web site.

There's more positive comment, but the point is that regular folks have serious questions about vaccinations, and medical science would do well to reassure us in a fundamental, not a patronizing, way.

Until then, yes, I think parents ought to be able to opt out.

Anne Michaud writes on family and parenting issues every Tuesday. If you'd like to participate in the Familyville Parenthood Panel or have a comment or suggestion, send it to Ammich@aol.com.

Sheri Nakken, R.N., MA, Classical Homeopath
Vaccination Information & Choice Network, Nevada City CA & Wales UK

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ANY INFO OBTAINED HERE NOT TO BE CONSTRUED AS MEDICAL OR LEGAL ADVICE.
THE DECISION TO VACCINATE IS YOURS AND YOURS ALONE.
