Cui Bono in Vaccine Mandate

Jan. 24, 2001

A recent issue of JAMA (Journal of the American Medical Association, 12-27-00) reports on a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) study that supports the widespread policy of forcing all children to be vaccinated in order to enter daycare or school. It makes the unsurprising claim that unvaccinated children are more likely to get measles and pertussis than those who are vaccinated.
The study used Colorado data because that is one of 15 states that allow parents a so-called philosophical exemption in addition to the religious and medical exemptions that other states allow. Only 1.4 percent claimed this exemption and more than 98 percent of Colorado children were vaccinated in the year cited by the study.

The CDC has declared that the United States has been free from indigenous measles since 1998 and the only cases come in with immigrants. Vaccination is not effective in about 5 percent of children, so when there is a measles outbreak, most of the cases are among vaccinated children.

The researchers had to go back more than ten years to find sufficient cases for the Colorado study and include a measles epidemic. If the researchers wanted to discuss current risks accurately, they should have focused on immigrants and ineffective vaccinations rather than on children whom they disdainfully call "exemptors."

It appears that the "experts" and the "authorities" won't be happy until there is 100 percent compliance with vaccine mandates. The real purpose of the report in JAMA seems to be to shame or scare the 1 to 2 percent of parents into not using a philosophical exemption and to induce states to repeal this exemption.

The same issue of JAMA includes an editorial commenting on the study. It, too, is based on the premise that vaccine mandates are good, and it deplores criticisms of vaccines by parents, implying that their objections must be based on ignorance or misinformation.

But buried in the JAMA editorial are some startling comments and revelations.

Vaccine mandates go into effect in America in a procedure that evades accountability. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) first licenses the vaccine as safe; then the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that the vaccine be given to all children; then state legislatures specify which vaccines and how many doses are required (or authorize a state health agency to do this).

JAMA absolves ACIP, CDC and FDA from any accountability for the mandating of vaccines. The editorial says, "It is not the responsibility of these advisory bodies to determine which vaccines are mandated; that decision resides with the state."

In other words, state legislators take note. You should not mandate a vaccine just because FDA licenses it or ACIP recommends it; you are responsible to make your own decisions and you cannot pass the buck to FDA, ACIP or CDC.

So why do ACIP and FDA so gratuitously recommend so many vaccines for all children? JAMA's editorial reveals the answer: these recommendations are monetary decisions masquerading as medical decisions.

Here are JAMA's words: "Since federal funding for vaccines is determined by the ACIP through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, whenever possible the ACIP should endorse funding for vaccines that physicians and parents wish to administer." In other words, the real purpose of ACIP and FDA recommendations is to release federal funds to buy the vaccines from the manufacturers.

Rep. Dan Burton's (R-IN) investigation last year revealed many conflicts of interest among those who sit on federal panels where they can vote the recommendations that trigger the federal funds. Many panelists receive financial benefits from the vaccine manufacturers.

JAMA issues a stern caveat to the states: "All vaccines that are licensed and recommended for use in children should not necessarily be legally mandated for day care or school entry. Each state needs to assess each vaccine individually."

JAMA's warning continues: "States should determine whether the disease to be prevented by the vaccines is highly contagious, results in significant morbidity and mortality, and poses a major health problem to both the individual and the community." It's obvious that these are not the criteria used by the ACIP and FDA in their pronouncements about vaccines.

Many states are now amending their compulsory vaccination laws to add hepatitis B and chicken pox. An independent assessment of these vaccines by a state is unlikely to conclude that they meet the criteria set forth by JAMA.

Rep. Dan Burton should have more hearings to expose the government's vaccine licensing/recommendation/mandate process. Meanwhile, since the government's decision-making procedure is not only defective but suspect, we need a philosophical exemption in every state so that decisions can be made by parents whose motive is the health of their children, not promoting government purchases of vaccines.

Independent judgments by states and consumers might have helped to avoid past blunders like the rotavirus vaccine embarrassment last year that caused injuries and death to so many babies. At a minimum, a philosophical exemption in every state would create a market demand for improvement of vaccines.