

# An epidemic of fear

[Science](#), [Social Science](#)



## An Epidemic of Fear

From the first reading it can be concluded that Wakefield and his colleagues rigged the results by altering facts about the patients in the study. Brian Deer, a journalist claimed that despite Wakefield's assertion that 12 children studied were normal till they had the MMR, five of them had previously encountered developmental problems. All cases were twisted and misrepresented when Deer compared the data with the medical records. This study raises serious doubts in the mind regarding the authenticity of the claims made by Wakefield. This holds claims made by Wakefield and his advocates flawed. The impact of their study back then is worth nothing such that even today the immunization rates of measles, mumps and rubella have not been fully recovered. About the out-break of epidemic emerging a year before Wakefield's research was proven to be fraudulent, I feel that there was no connection between vaccines and autism in the first place. The research was highly plausible.

In his article "An Epidemic of Fear", Offit voiced out various risks. He never lobbied the Bush administration in its endeavors to implement a program that was aimed at giving small pox vaccines to tens of thousands of Americans. He feared that implemented this program will kill people. According to him, preventive vaccine was a bigger risk than the risk of chicken pox itself. It was the notion of risk in his mind that triggered the anti-vaccine movement. He felt that the parents should be given the option to opt out of such vaccines and be able to see for themselves, if the movement would be risky for children or not. The idea was also embedded in CDC's vaccination schedule- the over all risk to public health after such a move was

too big to allow individuals or to give them the liberty to take decisions that will affect their communities. Risk is also one of the main motivating aspects of Offit's life. He took the risk of giving his teen children the flu-vaccine even before it was recommended for children of their age group. The risk here for him was the harm inflicted on his children if they got sick. He wanted to protect his children at any risk and he also wanted Americans to be completely educated about risk and not automate their thinking mechanism. According to him " choice not to get a vaccine is not a choice to take no risk, It's just a choice to take a different risk, and we need to be better about saying, ' Here's what that different risk looks like.' Dying of Hib meningitis is a horrible, ugly way to die." This article is a very effective piece of writing by Amy Wallace. It projects how Offit has become the primary target of grass-root movements which oppose systematic vaccination of children and the laws that need it.

Herd immunity is a key concept explained in the articles. According to this concept, for diseases passed down from one person to another, it is a lot more difficult to maintain a chain of infection when everyone in the population is immune. (Wallace)

In the article, ' Parents Guide to Vaccines' different types of vaccines are discussed which parents can opt for to prevent their children from diseases. These include diphtheria, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, Hib, Influenza, Measles, mumps, Pertusis, Polio, rotavirus, rubella, tetanus and vericella. It is important for parents to vaccinate their kids to prevent them from suffering from these diseases. Other than these routine childhood vaccines which have been suggested for children, there are other vaccines that have been

recommended for older children and younger children under some special circumstances. There are vaccines like rabbies recommended for children who have been bitten by animals , typhoid, Japanes encephalitis or Yellow fever.

#### Works Cited

Wallace, Amy. An Epidemic of Fear: How Panicked Parents Skipping Shots Endangers Us All. 19 10 2009. 16 10 2011 .