

Louisiana Pharmacists Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Public about Vaccinations

With the renewed debate recently highlighted in the media regarding the safety versus benefits of vaccines, the Louisiana Pharmacist Association (LPA) would like to recognize the importance of pharmacists as health-care providers and educators and inform the public as to the facts concerning vaccinations.

Many common misconceptions exist about the safety of vaccinations.

1. Do vaccines such as MMR or ingredients contained in the vaccines such as thimerosal cause autism?

There is no evidence to suggest that vaccinations, including MMR, are linked to autism. Many epidemiological studies have been conducted but are unable to link vaccinations to this condition. No explanation can be given as to how vaccines could contribute to the differences in brain structure seen in those with and those without autism. Ingredients such as thimerosal containing mercury have been extensively studied but have not been linked to the development of autism. It is known that genetics play an important role. Studies have shown that if one identical twin has a form of autism, there is greater than a 75% chance that the other child will have it as well.

2. Do vaccinations cause mental retardation?

Numerous studies containing over 100,000 participants have shown no correlation between receiving vaccinations and the development of mental retardation.

3. Can vaccines overwhelm the immune system leading to the development of autism and mental retardation?

From birth, a baby is exposed to a large number of bacteria and viruses in food, on most surfaces, and on their own skin. Therefore, it is unlikely that a baby's immune system would become overwhelmed by the smaller number of antigens present in vaccines.

4. Can the flu shot cause the flu?

You cannot get the flu from a flu shot. The flu shot consists of inactivated viruses which cannot cause a person to contract the illness. Although, soreness, redness, minor swelling at the injection site, fever, and aches are side effects that may occur, some of these symptoms can be alleviated with acetaminophen. On rare occasions, severe anaphylactic reactions occur requiring immediate emergency treatment.

5. Can HIV be contracted from vaccines?

HIV can only be contracted via the transfer of infected bodily fluid. With proper sterile administration techniques, this would not be possible. A false positive reactivity for HIV antibodies has previously been documented in patients for a few months following administration of the influenza vaccination. These patients were not, however, infected with HIV. Cross-reactivity occurred between serum IgM and the HIV test kit components.

What would happen if we stopped vaccinating against diseases that have become rare and undetected?

Unless a disease was completely eradicated, it would slowly reemerge in prevalence. This was clearly evident in countries such as Great Britain, Sweden, and Japan following a reduction in the use of pertussis vaccine in the 1970's and 80's. These countries saw a huge surge in pertussis over the years following the decline in vaccinations, thereby leading to a spike in infection rates and deaths. In such situations, diseases such as diphtheria, measles, mumps, tetanus, varicella, and hepatitis could reemerge at epidemic levels.

What role do pharmacists play in increased access to vaccinations, and how does this impact vaccination rates?

Access, access, access! Pharmacists are the health care professionals visited more often than any other group. Furthermore, pharmacists are able to screen patients, counsel them on pertinent information as it pertains to the need for vaccinations, and properly document the care provided. Pharmacists are trained in anatomy, physiology, medical genetics, pathology, clinical medicine, pharmacology, and pharmaceuticals. Prior to receiving authorization to vaccinate, pharmacists voluntarily are certified through a 16 hour national training program focused solely on vaccinations. In every state where pharmacists have been actively engaged in delivering vaccines, rates of vaccinated adults have soared. Because pharmacies are the most connected of the health professions, documentation to online registries and feedback to primary care providers is easy and accomplished with great speed.

Why should vaccinations be supported by public funds?

There are many social and economic cost-savings associated with vaccines. Parents can ensure that their children experience fewer childhood illnesses thus reducing stress and financial strain incurred by families. Providing vaccinations with public funds reduces the incidence of potential health disparities. Diseases that are prevented with vaccinations result in reduced medical expenses and deaths. Investing public funds in preventative care such as vaccinations is a vital key in long-term government expense reduction regarding health-care.

Sources

www.cdc.gov/vaccines

www.pharmacist.com

Authors

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The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information

**about the LPA and its benefits, contact Phyllis Perron, LPA Executive Director
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