

The Importance of Vaccinations

Have you ever heard of a polio outbreak? Most likely you have not, and there is a reason for that. With today's scientific advances, many deadly diseases can be prevented with either one injection or a series of injections. Vaccinations have wiped out many ailments that used to run rampant in previous years. Despite the benefits of vaccinations, there are people who still do not want to get their children vaccinated. Without vaccinations, deadly diseases can spread quickly and cause mass infections. This is especially true in places where there are a lot of people in a contained space. Public schools are one of the places where the spreading of diseases could be especially dangerous. Children are kept in close quarters for long periods of time. With so many kids in one area, illnesses can spread at a rapid pace. For that reason, all children in public schools should be required to get vaccinations.

A small percent of American parents are against vaccinating their children. For many of them, it is a parental rights issue. Jane Fullerton Lemons, an author at CQ Researcher, says that they believe that it is their right as a parent to decide whether or not to vaccinate their child. Another argument is that vaccines are not safe. A small sect of people think they can cause autism. This group has been led by many public figures, including Jenny McCarthy. Due to these high-profile figureheads, the movement has gained traction. A more widely common reason people do not think vaccines are safe is because of the side effects they can cause. These people often have a distrust of the medical community and prefer to use their own research to make decisions. The last popular argument is that new vaccines are only required to make more money for pharmaceutical companies, and are not actually needed to keep children healthy. In a recent poll conducted, less than half of the participants involved trusted pharmaceutical companies (Lemons). The benefits of vaccinating children outweigh the possible disadvantages. It seems irresponsible to risk a child's life by not getting enough factual evidence on the topic of vaccinations.

Despite the argument that deciding to vaccinate a child is a parental rights issue, the health of the child is more important. In two previous Supreme Court cases, the justices have ruled in favor of children getting vaccinated (Lemons). Dr. Paul Offit, the head of the Vaccine Education center at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia said, "There's not a year that goes by at our hospital where we don't see a child suffer and die from a vaccine-preventable disease" (qtd. in Lemons). When it comes to the side effects of vaccines, it has been proven many times in the past that vaccines do not cause autism. In 1998 an article was published by Andrew Wakefield claiming that the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine caused autism. Years later, his article was retracted, and he lost his medical license for publishing falsified information (Lemons). Dr. Fiona Good, an executive at the *British Medical Journal*, said, "the MMR scare was based not on bad science but complete fraud" (qtd. in Lemons). When it comes to less serious side effects, like a fever for example, they are very rare and are often not harmful. In addition, even with the rising costs of vaccines, people are still saving money by getting them. In 2009, the estimated costs of getting United States children vaccinated was 7.5 billion dollars. The cost of treating preventable diseases is much higher. By vaccinating children, around 76 billion dollars is saved nationwide (Lemons). Vaccines can only be beneficial to parents of young children. Their child will be healthy, and they will be saving money in the long run.

Without vaccines, deadly and dangerous diseases could cause a widespread pandemic. These illnesses are still out there, but because of vaccines people do not get infected by them. In 2014 there were twenty-four measles cases spread out through twenty-seven states. Before the outbreak, it was thought that the measles virus had been completely eradicated. Due to children not getting the measles vaccine, the disease spread quickly and far. There is another example of this recently at Disneyland in California. One child caused an outbreak of 141 measles cases nationwide and internationally. It was fueled by low vaccination rates. There were reports that some areas where the disease ran rampant had less than a fifty percent

vaccination rate. Medical professionals recommend a vaccination rate of ninety-six to ninety-nine percent in populated areas in order for them to be considered safe (Lemons). If schools do not meet the recommended vaccination rate, the same thing that happened at Disneyland could happen there too. Even though people may think that certain illnesses are gone for good, they are still out there. The only reason they do not get more attention is because vaccines have stopped them from cropping up again. Without these precautions, all the hard work that has been done to try and keep people safe could be erased.

Not vaccinating children not only impacts them, it also impacts the people around them. Rhett Krawitt, a six-year-old from California, was diagnosed with leukemia. Due to his leukemia diagnosis, he was not able to get vaccinated against measles. During the measles outbreak his mother called his school asking for children who had not been vaccinated to be banned in order to protect Rhett. She was informed that more than six percent of the children in his class were not vaccinated against measles for personal reasons (Lemons). Rhett's father, Carl Krawitt, said, "If your child gets sick and gets my child sick and my child dies, then... your action has harmed my child" (qtd. in Lemons). When someone decides to not vaccinate their child, they are not only putting that child at risk, they are also putting everyone around them at risk. Children with a lowered immune system, and those who cannot get vaccinations for medical reasons, could be deeply affected by other children not being vaccinated. An illness that would make a healthy child just a little bit sick could be deadly for those with an immune deficiency.

Vaccines are used as protection to the human population. Without them, there is no telling what might happen. All public schools should require the children attending them to be up-to-date on their vaccinations. By vaccinating all children in public schools, they are kept safe from harmful diseases that could impact them for the rest of their lives.

Work Cited

Lemons, Jane Fullerton. "Vaccine Controversies." *CQ Researcher*, 19 Feb. 2016, pp. 169-92

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