

## Executive Director's Column

by Patricia S. Lemer, M.Ed., NCC, M.S. Bus.



It's been a busy week for vaccines. On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims ruled against three families who argued that vaccination contributed to their children's autism. The same day, I received an email and a call from two individuals questioning health issues in their children, and whether they might be related to recent vaccines. The day after the ruling, I met with a group of anxious parents struggling with vaccine decisions for their infants and toddlers.

### Does the MMR Vaccine Cause Autism?

This week, unlike last year in the Hannah Poling case (see 12:4,8), the court ruled that evidence presented in three cases by parents of children with autism did not prove a link between autism and vaccines. Many are not convinced; the vaccine/autism connection remains highly controversial, with entrenched vested interests on both sides. One unconvinced parent is Lisa Rudley, a DDR Board member and founder of a parent support group in Westchester County, NY. "I heard my son's inconsolable crying, watched him arching his back and lived through his severe diarrhea, following two-month-old shots. He was later diagnosed as autistic. A mother's observation of her child is valuable... It's not bad science, it's bad vaccines."

### Can the Gardasil Vaccine Cause Endometriosis?

The email was from a friend questioning whether her 16-year-old daughter's recently diagnosed endometriosis was related to the Gardasil vaccine she had received last year to prevent cervical cancer and human papilloma virus (HPV). Many in the medical community are concerned about some of the negative reactions to Gardasil, ranging from loss of consciousness to seizures, and including severe headaches, dizziness and temporary loss of vision. These symptoms are immediate; determining whether endometriosis appearing a year after the vaccine is almost impossible to relate to the vaccine.

### Can the Chickenpox Vaccine Cause OCD?

The call I received was from a chiropractor using allergy elimination treatments for a teenager whose reactions to many foods worsened, and who developed Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) following a chickenpox vaccine. Most of us who grew up in the fifties remember chickenpox as a generally mild disease accompanied by fever, a runny nose and those telltale spots. Today, few children get chickenpox. The varicella vaccine, given to prevent chicken pox, is counter-indicated for those with "severe allergies." Could this teen's "OCD" be considered an "allergic" reaction?

### Who is At Risk for a Vaccine Reaction?

NVIC and others suggest taking precautions if a child

- is ill or is recovering from a recent illness
- has a family member who had a severe reaction to a shot
- has a relative with a history of convulsions or neurological disease
- was born prematurely or with low birth weight
- has a personal or family history of allergies to cow's milk
- has asthma, eczema or other immune related conditions

# Vaccine Reactions: What You Don't Know Could Hurt Your Child

### Immediate Symptoms of Vaccine Reactions

Every vaccine carries risks. The following are some common signs of a vaccine reaction, which can range from mild to severe. If you observe any of these or other troublesome symptoms, seek medical help immediately.

- Rash, hives, itching, swelling and redness at injection site
- Fever over 103°F; seizures or convulsions
- Dizziness, fainting, wheezing or difficulty breathing
- Rapid heart beat or chest pain
- Muscle weakness, limpness, or lack of responsiveness
- Loss of vision or speech
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Unusual behaviors such as, prolonged crying or high-pitched screaming

If your child experiences serious health problems following vaccination, tell your doctor immediately. The law requires him/her to report adverse reactions to vaccination within 30 days to the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS). Parents can also file a vaccine adverse event report at [www.vaers.hhs.gov](http://www.vaers.hhs.gov) or by calling 800.822.7967. You may also make a report to The National Vaccine Information Center's (NVIC) Vaccine Reaction Registry, operated since 1982, at [www.nvic.org/reportreaction.aspx](http://www.nvic.org/reportreaction.aspx).

### What is a "Long-Term" Vaccine Reaction?

According to Randall Neustaedter, OMD, in his book *The Vaccine Guide*, "deep controversy surrounds the issue of delayed or 'long-term' reactions, because these do not have a clear causal link to vaccines. Few studies show long-term safety of any vaccine."

Chronic disease, however, seems to be replacing infectious disease. Immune system problems possibly resulting from vaccines include asthma and allergies. Auto-immune disorders that appear to have their onset following vaccination include diabetes, arthritis and multiple sclerosis (MS). Neurological injury includes seizures, learning disabilities, attention deficits, and yes...autism.

### Preventing Vaccine Reactions

For those electing to vaccinate, Neustaedter recommends a nutritional supplement program, especially for children with allergies. He includes omega-3 fats, natural vitamins A, C and E, to decrease inflammation and as antioxidants, and zinc to stimulate immune function. I share these guidelines with all the parents to whom I speak.

### It's Not Over Yet

Even though autism parents lost this week's battle, the war is not yet over. More than 5,300 cases are awaiting hearings with VAERS. Hopefully some day we will have an option other than a one-size-fits-all vaccine schedule that will allow parents, not courts to decide what is right for their children.

Are autism, endometriosis and OCD vaccine reactions? We will not know for sure until scientists look at Gardasil, varicella and the aggressive pediatric vaccine schedule long-term. Because today's children cannot wait, know how to prevent a vaccine reaction in your child, what to look for, and what steps to take NOW!