

Vaccines do not cause autism

it's mostly genetic and removing thimerosal didn't lower incidence

The claim that vaccines supposedly cause autism was a hoax invented by Andrew Wakefield, who was then a doctor in Britain. It was based on fraudulent pseudo-science that he crafted, which has since been retracted by the science journal that made the mistake of publishing it. Mr. Wakefield had his medical license revoked for perpetrating this fraud but that accountability merely amplified his claims of victimhood for the anti-vaccine movement he helped supersize.

This collection starts with links to some of the primary investigation that showed how Wakefield made up this hoax, the financial motives behind the lie and worse, how it amplified vaccine distrust that threatens to reverse progress against diseases. Links to scientific studies that debunk this disinformation follow.

<https://briandeer.com/doctor-who-fooled-world.htm>

<https://briandeer.com/mmr/lancet-summary.htm>

Andrew Wakefield: the fraud investigation

<https://briandeer.com/solved/bmj-secrets-series.htm>

BMJ series on the Wakefield fraud

Exposed: Secrets of the MMR scare

In the wake of his investigation for *The Sunday Times* of London, Brian Deer was invited by BMJ, the *British Medical Journal*, to set out his *Sunday Times* findings in more detail for its mostly medically-qualified readership

Online introduction to the series: 5 January 2011

[Piltdown medicine – the missing link between MMR and autism](#)

BMJ editorial: 5 January 2011

[Wakefield's article linking MMR vaccine with autism was fraudulent](#)

Story 1: 5 January 2011

[How the case against the MMR vaccine was fixed](#)

Story 2: 11 January 2011

[How the vaccine crisis was meant to make money](#)

Chronology: 11 January 2011

[BMJ: Timeline](#)

Story 3: 19 January 2011

[The Lancet's two days to bury bad news](#)

Editor's comment: 19 January 2011

[Institutional and editorial misconduct in the MMR scare](#)

Response to emails: 7 February 2011

[The BMJ editor replies to Wakefield supporters](#)

Picture: 15 February 2011

[Brian Deer at the Canadian Journalism Foundation](#)

Story 4: 9 November 2011

[Pathology reports solve "new bowel disease" riddle](#)

Editorial: 9 November 2011

[Institutional research misconduct](#)

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Wakefield fails in vexatious Texas lawsuit: 2012-14

[Disgraced ex-doctor loses fourth attempt to gag media](#)

Wakefield crank campaigner: Dr David L Lewis

[Brian Deer has "considerable expertise in medical practice"](#)

Earlier comments on General Medical Council: 2 February 2010

[Reflections on investigating Wakefield](#)

Earlier report on bowel pathology: 15 April 2010

[Special report – "Autistic enterocolitis"](#)

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[Selected MMR-Wakefield resources](#)

My Conversation with Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Twenty years ago, I had a one-hour conversation with RFK Jr. In his current campaign for president, he has referred to that conversation during public appearances. It's time to set the record straight

Twenty years ago, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. left a message on my voice mail. He said that he had a few questions he thought I could answer. I was thrilled. The son of Robert F. Kennedy, a United States senator and civil rights icon, wanted to talk to me. I was a huge fan of RFK. I had read his book, *Thirteen Days*, which contained the quote, "The lowest reaches in hell are reserved for those who, in times of moral uncertainty, are ambivalent." RFK was talking about the Cuban missile crisis, but he could just as easily have been talking about civil rights. It was a call to arms. I couldn't wait to speak with his son.



PAUL OFFIT
JUN 26, 2023

When I finally got in touch with him, RFK Jr. explained that several mothers had come to him, concerned about vaccine safety. Would I help him understand the science behind their fears? We spent about an hour talking mostly about thimerosal, an ethylmercury-containing preservative that had been removed from childhood vaccines in 2001. I thought the call went well. I remember telling my wife that night about how I felt confident that I had answered his questions.

Thanks for reading Beyond the Noise! Subscribe for free to receive new posts and support my work.

Soon after our conversation, on July 14, 2005, RFK Jr. published an article in *Rolling Stone* that also appeared on the website, *Salon.com*. It was titled "Deadly Immunity." Kennedy had sandbagged me. According to the article, I was part of a group of government agents and industry insiders that had "colluded with Big Pharma to hide the risks of thimerosal from the public."

The article was full of misstatements. RFK Jr. claimed that the amount of ethylmercury in vaccines was 187 times greater than the recommended limit, when it was [only 1.4 times greater](#). He claimed that thimerosal in vaccines had caused autism, when [several studies](#) had shown that it hadn't. Kennedy wrote that I had defended mercury in vaccines because the rotavirus vaccine on which I was a co-inventor was "laced with thimerosal." But the rotavirus vaccine, which was licensed one year later, never contained a preservative. I called a senior editor at *Rolling Stone* who later retracted the article, as did *Salon*.

RFK Jr.'s most recent rant against me was delivered in a 3-hour episode on *The Joe Rogan Experience*, the most popular podcast in the world. Kennedy recounted his conversation with me. He told Rogan that to help him interpret studies evaluating the safety of mercury in vaccines, he had first called senior officials at the National Institutes of Health and the National Academy of Sciences. "And they kept saying to me I can't answer that detailed question," said

Kennedy. “You need to talk to Paul Offit. Paul Offit made a \$186 million deal with Merck. Odd to me that government regulators said that you should talk to someone in the industry.” First, I have never worked for a pharmaceutical company. At the time of the interview, our rotavirus vaccine wasn’t a licensed product. Second, although Fred Clark, Stanley Plotkin, and I are co-inventors and co-patent holders of the rotavirus vaccine, we are the intellectual property of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and the Wistar Institute. For all practical purposes, those institutions owned the patent, which they later sold to asset acquisition companies. I didn’t make a deal with anybody. And companies don’t pay \$186 million for a product that isn’t a product yet. **RFK Jr.’s statement about my \$186 million dollar deal with Merck was a complete and utter lie.** And it’s resulted in hate mail, physical altercations with anti-vaccine activists, and three death threats. One caller threatened my children. By falsely labelling me as someone willing to line my pockets at the expense of children’s health, RFK Jr. put both me and my family at risk.

RFK Jr. wasn’t finished: “It was weird to me that the top regulators in the country were telling me to go talk to an industry insider because we don’t understand the science. I talked to him, and I caught him in a lie. And both of us knew that he was lying.” “What was the lie?” asked Rogan. “I asked him why is it that the CDC and every state regulator recommends that pregnant women do not eat tuna fish to avoid the mercury but that the CDC is recommending mercury containing flu shots with huge boluses of mercury...And he said, ‘Well, Bobby, there are two kinds of mercury. There’s the good mercury and the bad mercury.’ [But] there is no such thing as the good mercury. I know a lot about mercury...Mercury was really an adjuvant that stimulates the immune system. Worse, mercury doesn’t kill bacteria like streptococcus or staph.”

Again, RFK Jr. was wrong. First, thimerosal isn’t an adjuvant, it’s a preservative. Second, thimerosal is bacteriostatic not bactericidal. It doesn’t kill bacteria; it prevents bacteria from growing. Finally, mercury is part of the earth’s crust, where it exists harmlessly in an inorganic state. However, due to rock erosion and volcanos, mercury is released onto the earth’s surface where it is picked up by bacteria and converted to an organic form: methylmercury. Unlike inorganic mercury, methylmercury can cross cell membranes and do harm. Indeed, methylmercury poisonings caused by industrial accidents in Japan and Iraq caused neurological damage in both adults and unborn children. But because mercury is in the earth’s crust, everyone has mercury in their bodies at levels well below those that are harmful. In the words of Paracelsus, a 16th century physician, “The dose makes the poison.”

Ethylmercury (thimerosal), however, is not methylmercury. While methylmercury has a half-life in the bloodstream of about 70 days, ethylmercury has a half-life of seven days. So, it’s much less likely to accumulate and do harm. During the Rogan interview, RFK Jr. explained how he first came to believe that thimerosal was harmful. “In 2003, a CDC researcher named Pichichero did [a study](#) where he gave tuna sandwiches that were mercury-contaminated to children and then measured their blood...Then he injected the children with mercury from a vaccine and the mercury disappeared in a week. But where did it go?” Kennedy then referred to [a study](#) by Thomas Burbacher, who found that after injecting infant monkeys with thimerosal, mercury was detected in the brain where, according to RFK Jr. it “caused severe inflammation.” “And I told Offit about that study, and he was quiet and said there was a mosaic of other studies. I asked him to send them to me. But he never did and that’s the last I heard from him.”

Once again, RFK Jr. had misrepresented the facts. First, I am certain that if RFK Jr. had asked me to send him studies, I would have done it. Either I sent him the studies, or he never asked me to send them. In either case, RFK Jr. has said that he has taped our conversation. Great. Release the tape. Let’s hear what really happened. Second, Michael Pichichero studied infants as young as two months of age; he never fed them tuna fish sandwiches. Third,

Pichichero concluded, "Administration of vaccines containing thimerosal does not seem to raise blood concentrations of mercury above safe values in infants." Finally, it was not surprising that Thomas Burbacher found trace quantities of ethylmercury in the brain of infant monkeys injected with thimerosal, which can cross cell membranes. But RFK Jr. lied when he said that the mercury had caused "severe inflammation." Burbacher didn't report any evidence of inflammation, writing, "no serious medical complications were observed in any of the monkeys."

RFK Jr. was probably right when he said that I had referred to a "mosaic" of studies supporting the safety of thimerosal in children. By the time that RFK Jr. and I spoke, several had already been published:

- 1) Researchers in the United Kingdom performed a [retrospective study](#) to determine the relationship between thimerosal in infant vaccines and neurodevelopmental disorders. They found that thimerosal did not cause mercury toxicities.
- 2) Researchers in the United Kingdom also performed a [prospective study](#) in children 6 to 91 months of age comparing thimerosal quantities in vaccines and cognitive and behavioral development. They found no evidence that thimerosal affected neurologic or psychological outcomes.
- 3) Researchers also compared the [prevalence and incidence of autism](#) in California, Sweden, and Denmark following receipt of thimerosal-containing vaccines between the mid-1980s and late-1990s. They found that thimerosal was not associated with increased rates of autism.
- 4) Researchers in the United States [evaluated the relationship](#) between thimerosal and neurodevelopmental disorders in 124,000 infants born between 1992 and 1999, finding no significant associations.
- 5) Researchers in Denmark [assessed the incidence of autism](#) in children 2 to 10 years of age before and after removal of thimerosal from vaccines. Ironically, they found that the discontinuation of thimerosal in vaccines was followed by an increase in the incidence of autism.
- 6) Researchers in Denmark also evaluated [the incidence of autism](#) in children born between 1990 and 1996 who received either thimerosal-containing vaccines or thimerosal-free vaccines. They found that the incidence of autism did not differ between the two groups.

Before our rotavirus vaccine was recommended by both the CDC and the World Health Organization for all infants in 2006, rotavirus killed about 2,000 children every day in the world. Our vaccine is estimated to save hundreds of lives every day. It's the professional accomplishment of which I'm most proud. What, exactly, has Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. accomplished? Using the platform of a famous name, he has chosen to lie about vaccines and vaccine safety, no doubt putting children in harm's way. And now he's running for president of the United States.

https://www.reddit.com/r/RFK_Jr_is_a_Stooge/comments/153rf20/reasonable_family_members_are_becoming_rfk_jr/spaniel_rage

I would also add this: **the "explosion" in autism diagnoses is mostly due to considerable alterations to the *definition* of what autism is.** The diagnostic umbrella was considerably expanded in 1987 and then again in 1994 to include the milder end of what is now understood to be a "spectrum":

<https://www.spectrumnews.org/news/evolution-autism-diagnosis-explained/#:~:text=The%20DSM%20III%20was%20revised,for%20onset%20before%2030%20months.>

Rigorous studies have demonstrated that **it is the change in definition that is responsible for the majority of the increases in diagnosis.**

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/1919642>

I wear two hats here: I'm a medical doctor who has long had an interest in debunking antivax pseudoscience and conspiracy theories, and I'm also father to a 2 year old on the autistic spectrum. RFK's rhetoric is not just dangerously wrong but it's also grossly dehumanising and stigmatising of neurodivergent children, the majority of which are of average or above average intelligence, as "damaged".

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2022.856084/full>

This lecture by a neuropsychiatrist was an absolute game changer in my understanding of what "autism spectrum" actually is and why it seems that there are actually evolutionary pressures *selecting for* the genes associated with autism:

<https://youtu.be/0o1PXeFEcL0>

It is worth noting that **the "peer reviewed literature" that RFK uses in his arguments are for the most part produced by a tiny handful of academics whose entire output is vaccine sceptic pseudoscience published in fringe publications.** Not all peer reviewed research is created equal. An example is Shaw and Tomljenovic from the Dept of Ophthalmology at UBC who singlehandedly produce much of the output on aluminium in vaccines. The rest of the immunology and public health establishment has pointed out many times that their research is shoddy and methodologically flawed:

<https://www.skepticalraptor.com/skepticalraptorblog.php/ubc-responded-retraction-anti-vaccine-paper/>

The most prominent one from RFK's thiomerosal days is **Mark Geier**, a Maryland physician and medical geneticist. **Fully a *quarter* of the articles listed on RFK's site are written by him and his son (who has no health science qualifications).** Of note, **his medical license was revoked for conducting unsupervised experiments on autistic children using *puberty blockers* to cure autism:**

<https://theness.com/neurologicablog/index.php/mark-geiers-license-suspended/>

<https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/chemical-castration-for-autism-after-three-years-the-mainstream-media-finally-notices/>

He made *millions* acting as an "expert witness" in vaccine injury trial and in licensing his cruel and unproven "Lupron protocol" trial to clinics in half a dozen states.

These are RFK'S "experts" and they are narcissistic grifters just like him.

<https://www.respectfulinsolence.com/2023/04/03/autism-prevalence-increases-to-1-in-38-and-antivaxxers-freak-out-again/>
by Dr. David Gorski, M.D.

Many years ago, long before the COVID-19 pandemic upended everything and turbocharged the antivaccine movement beyond anything any of us had ever seen or predicted, the central conspiracy theory of the antivaccine movement (as I like to call it) was that vaccines caused autism, and the CDC and FDA were covering up the evidence. In retrospect, that version of the central conspiracy theory seems almost quaint compared to the current version centered around COVID-19 vaccines (particularly mRNA vaccines), in which antivaxxers claim that these vaccines are killing, sterilizing, and inducing “turbo cancers” in millions, but the CDC and FDA (plus, Anthony Fauci) covered up the evidence that was apparently so obvious that experts missed all the signals that people with no training in medicine, epidemiology, or vaccinology could find.

Increasing numbers of diagnoses ≠ increasing number of people with a given condition or disease

I’d like to conclude once again by emphasizing that the increasing prevalence of a condition really means an increase in the number of people given a diagnosis associated with that condition, not necessarily a “true” increase in the prevalence of the condition. If you look for a disease or medical condition more intensively, you will always find more of it—often a lot more. Always. If this principle works for something that is diagnosed by an objective test, namely a biopsy, how much more so is it likely to be for a condition that has no unequivocal biochemical or tissue test to nail down the diagnosis, like ASDs, particularly for a spectrum of disorders whose diagnostic criteria has changed considerably over the last 30 years to be more inclusive?

None of this rules out an increase in the “true” prevalence of autism over the last few decades, but the increasing consensus is that the evidence does rule out the sort of massive increase that antivaxxers claim and then blame on vaccines. What is most likely happening is that we’re getting better and better at finding and diagnosing autism, including milder cases, to the point where the apparent prevalence of autism (i.e, the number of diagnoses) is starting to converge on the “true” biological prevalence of autism as it is defined today and that we might just be starting to see the sorts of differences in that “true” prevalence attributable to race, gender, and ethnicity that we see for many medical conditions and diseases, no vaccines needed as a “root cause” to explain.

<https://www.respectfulinsolence.com/2024/11/15/rfk-jr-as-hhs-secretary-will-be-a-catastrophe-for-public-health-and-medical-research/#comments>

Denice Walter

says:

November 22, 2024 at 11:08 am

RFK Jr knows *so much* about medicine/ research that he takes testosterone despite having A-Fib since his university days which required several electro-conversion procedures/ hospital stays when he was older. He believes his vocal condition may have been caused by flu vaccines. During the pandemic, he told his aged mother to avoid Covid vaccines.

Plus his lack of knowledge about what actually 'causes' autism.

Denice Walter

says:

November 18, 2024 at 10:10 am

Agreed.

In addition, "Bobby", Super-sleuth of Science, in his devastating investigations somehow failed to uncover thousands of studies that show, in minute detail, how autism develops prenatally, throughout gestation, and afterward- from genetic differences that result in neurological anomalies in the micro-architecture of the PFC which are studied by autopsy, results of abortion, MRI, brain waves, physiognomy and observation of very young infants. These events can be pinned down to precise trimester and counting excess number of cells/ faulty connections. Autistic brains are different and didn't get that way from a vaccine. They were already that way.

Since the 1980s, knowledge has been accumulating (Eric Courchesne, Karen Pierce, Ed Lein, Chris Aldridge, Sally Ozonoff and many other researchers in the US and globally).

sadmar

says:

November 20, 2024 at 5:57 pm

Of the numerous political movements labelled as "populist", the closest to being the original is likely the Free Silver movement led by William Jennings Bryan in the late 19th Century: "To increase the money supply by freely coining silver, which was believed to help raise prices for farm goods and ease debt burdens." The idea was fiercely opposed by bankers and industrialists, who insisted on a strict gold standard, and thus were the target of Bryan's famous speech "you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!"

Why do I mention this? Because many cultural historians have argued that L. Frank Baum's The Wizard of Oz is a populist allegory. Dorothy is a Kansas farm girl, uprooted by natural disaster, told to seek respite from the Wizard of Oz (oz. being the measure of gold) in the big capital city at the end of the yellow brick (gold) road. Along the way she gathers allies in the Scarecrow (farmer) Tin Man (industrial labor) and Cowardly Lion (Bryan). They discover the Wizard (Mr. Gold) is a fraud, and Dorothy gets home thanks to her (in the book) silver slippers.

So now our fake populist autocrat, who dances to the tune of the wealthy and screws over the common people who believe in his magic has appointed a fraud supposed medical wizard named Oz to run (dismantle?) the public sector healthcare so many of those common folk depend on.

Could the sad irony be more perfect?

Vaccines don't cause autism (duh)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=NB8zLpXIWVY

Debunk the Funk with Dr. Wilson

31.2K subscribers

Premiered Jun 8, 2023

Donate to the Autistic Self Advocacy Network: <https://autisticadvocacy.org>

Dr. Anders Hviid's relevant papers:

- 1) <https://autismsciencefoundation.org/w...>
- 2) <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/full/...>
- 3) <https://www.nejm.org/doi/10.1056/NEJM...>
- 4) <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama...>
- 5) <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/1...>

Other papers showing that vaccines don't cause autism:

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama...>
<https://publications.aap.org/pediatric...>
<https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retri...>
<https://publications.aap.org/pediatric...>
<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/10997/imm...>

www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_w7vocY4YM

Why we know that vaccine/autism claims are bollocks

Back to the Science

Jul 3, 2023

A common false claim of antivaxxers, including Robert F. Kennedy Jr, is that vaccines cause autism. This claim started with a specific claim about the MMR vaccine, but some antivaxxers have now taken it further and extended it to all vaccines using spurious claims about vaccine ingredients. So, in this video, Dr Susan Oliver and Cindy the dog will go back to the science and first show why the MMR vaccine / autism is bollocks, and then show why the other claims are also bollocks.

Links to other videos mentioned:

How RFK Jr made nonsense sound credible on Joe Rogan



- How RFK Jr made nonsense sound credib...

CLIP: Antivaxxers mercury confusion



- CLIP: Antivaxxers mercury confusion

Links to data:

Autism – A different brilliant

<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/abo...>

RETRACTED: Ileal-lymphoid-nodular hyperplasia, non-specific colitis, and pervasive developmental disorder in children

<https://www.thelancet.com/journals/la...>

How the case against the MMR vaccine was fixed

<https://www.bmj.com/content/342/bmj.c...>

Time trends in autism and in MMR immunization coverage in California

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11231...>

Measles, Mumps, Rubella Vaccination and Autism – A Nationwide Cohort Study

<https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/full/...>

Neurologic Disorders After Measles-Mumps-Rubella Vaccination

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatric...>

Blood and Hair Aluminum Levels, Vaccine History, and Early Infant Development: A Cross-Sectional Study

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28919...>

Comorbidity of intellectual disability confounds ascertainment of autism: implications for genetic diagnosis

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26198...>

Autism phenotype versus registered diagnosis in Swedish children: prevalence trends over 10 years in general population samples

<https://www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h...>

Thimerosal Exposure in Infants and Developmental Disorders: A Retrospective Cohort Study in the United Kingdom Does Not Support a Causal Association

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatric...>

Thimerosal-Containing Vaccines and Autistic Spectrum Disorder: A Critical Review of Published Original Data

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatric...>

Autism and thimerosal-containing vaccines - Lack of consistent evidence for an association

<https://www.ajpmonline.org/article/S0...>

Vaccines are not associated with autism: An evidence-based meta-analysis of case-control and cohort studies

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science...>

I'm an autism parent. No way I will vote for Robert Kennedy Jr.. He's gutless.

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As an example, I will discuss one particularly egregious “therapy” that was used on autistic children, the so-called “Lupron protocol”. Mr. Kennedy was in a perfect spot to stop or limit this therapy, but he never did. It would have taken courage, and, in my opinion, Mr. Kennedy is gutless.

Robert Kennedy (RFK Jr.) is running for president. He failed to gain the Democratic Party nomination and is now running as a third-party candidate. Since the beginning of his campaign, he's faced criticism for being anti vaccine and anti-science. As someone who has watched Mr. Kennedy for nearly two decades I will agree: he is, indeed, anti-vaccine and anti-science. But that's not why I am strongly against the idea of him being president. I oppose his bid for one reason:

He's gutless.

Let me explain.

Long before Mr. Kennedy reached national prominence with his myriad of bad ideas during the COVID-19 pandemic, he was well known in the anti-vaccine autism-parent community. He was probably most famous for pushing the failed idea that mercury in vaccines caused an autism epidemic (an idea he still won't abandon). And this is where many discussions focus on how his actions are anti-science and anti-vaccine. But to me, I hurt for the harms Mr. Kennedy's advocacy has caused autistic people and the autism communities. One can say, “his anti-vaccine views have caused harm to public health”. One would be right. But, the anti-vaccine movement has long used autism and autistic people as the hammer with which they attack vaccines. And, to quote Sancho Panza in Man of La Mancha, “Whether the rock hits the pitcher or the pitcher hits the rock, it's generally bad for the pitcher”. Being the weapon of choice for attacking vaccines has caused increased stigma and allowed charlatans to sell fake “cures” for autism which range from useless to abusive.

As an example, I will discuss one particularly egregious “therapy” that was used on autistic children, the so-called “Lupron protocol”. Mr. Kennedy was in a perfect spot to stop or limit this therapy, but he never did. It would have taken courage, and, in my opinion, Mr. Kennedy is gutless.

For decades there have been regular autism-parent conventions focused primarily on two things: promoting the idea that vaccines cause autism and promoting fake “cures” for autism as a vaccine injury. And Mr. Kennedy has been prominent at these conventions, serving as a keynote speaker.

Mr. Kennedy speaks primarily on the idea that vaccines cause autism (they don’t). He’s well respected as someone who has been involved for decades in this arena. His name gives some credence to the others at these conventions, including those who push abusive therapies.

I have never heard of Mr. Kennedy speaking out against the fake, even abusive, “therapies” pushed at these parent conventions. Why? In my opinion:

He’s gutless.

Allow me to focus on one of the most egregious fake therapies pushed as part of the vaccines-cause-autism movement. There are more. Many more. But let’s just discuss chemical castration.

If you are thinking, no way that happened, Matt. You must be exaggerating. I’m not.

Doctors were prescribing Lupron in order to reduce the testosterone in autistic children. That’s chemical castration in my lay opinion. Dr. David Gorski, an oncologist, wrote a series of articles about this “treatment” as “why not just castrate them”.

Surely they had a good reasoning for taking such drastic measures, you must be thinking. No, they didn’t. In fact, the “science” behind the therapy is horrifically bad. It would be funny if it wasn’t actually used on children.

How was the “Lupron protocol” justified? First, let’s start with the idea that autism is caused by mercury. It isn’t, but this is the idea that Mr. Kennedy pushed so hard 20 years ago. Mercury intoxication is commonly treated by chelation, which is a way to remove mercury from the body. For years medical practitioners pushed chelation on autism parents (again, often at these autism parent conventions that Mr. Kennedy is known to speak at). Only chelation didn’t work. It didn’t work because autism isn’t mercury intoxication. But to people like the Geiers, the problem was that chelation wasn’t working, the problem was they needed a better way to chelate. They came up with the idea that testosterone was binding to mercury and keeping chelators from working. So, they postulated, remove the testosterone and one can remove the mercury

and the kid will stop being autistic. Which brings us to chemical castration: remove or reduce testosterone in the body. Which brings us back to Lupron.

Seriously, it happened. And a father-son team named Geier led the charge.

In order to prescribe the Lupron, the Geier's needed a diagnosis. Insurance companies aren't going to allow people to prescribe Lupron for mercury intoxication (even ignoring the fact that the Geiers didn't have evidence for mercury intoxication). So the Geier chose precocious puberty as the diagnosis. Diagnose a kid with precocious puberty and you can prescribe Lupron.

The Geiers got into trouble for this. In 2013 they were facing disciplinary action as noted by blogger Todd W. at Harpocrates Speaks (among many others). They were facing medical license suspension. In multiple states. So, you'd think people might be questioning the Geiers' "protocol". Perhaps checking the "science" that supported it? Well, not in Mr. Kennedy's circles, apparently.

A few days after Todd W. wrote his article, two things happened. The Geier's spoke at a parent convention called AutismOne. And Robert Kennedy was the keynote speaker for that convention.

Think about it. Mr. Kennedy could have told the parents at that convention that he stands apart from the Geiers. He could have just said perhaps people should be cautious, a relatively weak stance. Mr. Kennedy could have taken a stronger stance said that what the Geiers were doing was chemical castration and it was wrong, a much stronger stance.

To my knowledge Mr. Kennedy did not speak out then against the Geiers or any other practitioner of fake autism cures. I have no knowledge of him ever speaking out against charlatans.

It would have taken courage to speak out. It would have taken courage to admit to himself that he'd missed the obviously bogus science before, and that he, a self-professed science expert, was wrong. And it would have made a difference. I don't consider it hyperbolic to say that I consider chemical castration of disabled (or any) children to be abusive. And Mr. Kennedy could have slowed or even stopped this practice long before Dr. Geier lost his license. He was respected and a frequent speaker at these conventions.

It takes courage to face allies (the Geiers were long known for pushing the mercury-autism link. Mr. Kennedy cites them multiple times in his books) and say they are doing wrong. Mr. Kennedy didn't even have to admit that the mercury-causes-autism idea was false (which would have taken another step of courage and would have been the right thing to do). Just that chemically castrating disabled children is wrong.

Seriously, how hard is it to say, “Chemically castrating disabled children is wrong”, Mr. Kennedy?

Mr. Kennedy has spoken regularly at the “vaccines-cause-autism” parent conventions. And the Geiers were not the only ones pushing abusive therapies. It would have taken courage to say, “I will not speak and lend my name to a meeting where fake therapies are promoted.” But Mr. Kennedy lacks that courage.

This is largely due, I believe, to the fact that Mr. Kennedy lacks the courage to analyze his own lack of scientific expertise. My belief is that Mr. Kennedy, to this day, doesn’t understand just how bogus the “Lupron protocol” was. But it would take a courage for someone who has branded himself as a person who understands science (even though he lacks any credentials) to say, “You know what, I didn’t catch on to the idea that the science the Geiers were claiming was unsound.”

One might ask, was the Geier science obviously bogus? I would say yes and I would say that someone with the expertise Mr. Kennedy claims to have should have easily seen there was a problem very early on. Let me explain. The Geiers claimed that mercury and testosterone form “sheets”, large complexes, in the brains of autistic children. Sounds very scientific and all, until we found that the study the Geier’s were basing this idea upon involved boiling mercury and testosterone in benzene.

In my opinion, Mr. Kennedy should have known that a child’s brain is *not* similar to boiling benzene. Yes, this sounds snarky, but it really is that simple. The science behind the Geier’s “Lupron protocol” was really that bad.

But this discussion risks getting back into the realm of “He’s anti-science”. I bring this up not to point out Mr. Kennedy’s lack of science chops, but to point out that the science was so bad that it didn’t really take much analysis to see it.

That is if one has the courage to question. To question one’s allies. To question one’s own expertise. To question whether one’s own inaction led to the abuse of disabled children. And, again, in my opinion this was abuse. And Mr. Kennedy could have helped stop it sooner.

Again, I only picked one example. And this discussion has gone long, so you can understand why I chose only one example. But there are many examples of fake cures promoted at autism-parent conventions that Mr. Kennedy could have stopped. There’s also a lengthy discussion we could have about the stigma the anti-vaccine movement has brought to autistic people (one of Mr. Kennedy’s allies tried to label autism as “mad child disease”, to give you one example.) Mr. Kennedy could have spoken out against the stigmatizing language. But the fear of autism and autistic people has long been a mainstay of the anti-vaccine movement.

We need a president with courage. While others discuss his anti-vaccine views, his near self-delusional belief in his scientific acument, let me just say this again: Mr. Kennedy lacks courage.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is gutless.

By Matt Carey

More discussions

[This blog on Mr. Kennedy.](#)

[Articles on this blog about the Geiers.](#)

[Articles on this blog about Lupron.](#)

[Mark Geier's Wikipedia Page.](#)

<https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/a-new-study-reinforces-the-conclusion-that-autism-is-primarily-genetic/>

A new study reinforces the conclusion that autism is primarily genetic

Last week, the largest epidemiological study of its kind was published and concluded, once again, that autism is primarily due to genes and that the environmental component of autism risk is much smaller. Not surprisingly, once again antivaxers didn't want to hear that message.

David Gorski on July 22, 2019

The key belief of the modern antivaccine movement over the last two decades has been that vaccines either cause, contribute, or predispose children to autism. Although this particular belief is generally believed to have originated in 1998 with the publication of disgraced physician and scientist Andrew Wakefield's case series of 12 children that reported an association between vaccination with the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism and was published in *The Lancet*, the idea predates Wakefield's fraudulent publication. After all, a lawyer paid Wakefield handsomely to do "research" that he could use to sue vaccine manufacturers on behalf of parents of children with autism. Wakefield's case series was ultimately retracted due to findings of scientific fraud and Wakefield's medical license taken away, but it didn't matter. The idea that vaccines cause autism is the most prevalent antivaccine misinformation that fuels the movement, and Wakefield still milks it, having produced with Del Bigtree an antivaccine propaganda movie disguised as a documentary, *VAXXED*.

The idea is not just limited to the MMR vaccine, either. Another strain of antivaccine belief attributes autism to the mercury in the thimerosal preservative that was used in many childhood vaccines until 2001, while others claim it's "too many too soon," and still others blame DNA fragments in vaccines crossing the blood-brain barrier and causing neuroinflammation. Many are the vaccines blamed for autism, and many are the bogus proposed biological mechanisms by which vaccines supposedly "cause autism", but in the end it's always about the vaccines. Always. Antivaxers deny that autism has a major genetic components, and, even when they do conceded a genetic component, try to divert to claiming that it's a "genetic susceptibility" to "vaccine injury" that is responsible for autism, not primarily genetics.