

Dangers of Suppressing Medical Science: The Autism-Vaccine Controversy

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I am writing this article as a medical doctor and scientist, not a vaxer or anti-vaxer. This article is about medical science and fact, and how we utilize valid information to direct public policy and personal choice. Nowhere am I going to recommend for or against vaccines. The optimal vaccination schedule is information discovered and continuously refined by scientists. It is then shared by governments and doctors.

Science should be politically neutral and simply seeking and refining truth. Scientific fact enables us to predict how the seasons change, how hand-washing saves lives, and how electrons will move within our screens.

Religion on the other hand is a powerful human force based on faith. Belief in God, spirit and afterlife cannot be proven. Over the centuries, religious leaders and movements have suppressed fact, such as Galileo's discovery that the earth goes around the sun. Early medical scientists were persecuted, some burned, for dissecting bodies or questioning prevailing concepts.

Scientific fact is information, not dependent upon culture, language, or belief. The internet can enable anyone in the world to potentially have access to all information possessed by humanity. Certain information, such as how to filter water or make penicillin can save lives. Unfortunately for some, the political, religious and economic environments in which they live limits their access to internet information.

Medical Information and Informed Consent

Not that long ago, Medical Doctors withheld life-changing information from patients, such as when they have a fatal disease. In some cultures, this is still true. However, in the US, medical doctors are required by law to obtain "informed consent" from patients before making decisions about medical care. Informed consent requires providing facts about the benefits, risks, and alternatives to any treatment. This is true for all treatments, including vaccines.

If a doctor fails to provide informed consent, even if nothing goes wrong, they are committing malpractice. This is true even if the benefits are great for the individual and society and the risks are minor. A physician can still be held accountable for not providing complete information even when there are economic obstacles (such as an insurance company denying payment) or a political climate favors one treatment over another (such as vaccines).

Autism and Vaccines

Medical controversies have arisen over the centuries (see center box), with millions of people being harmed or dying from conditions that sometimes could have been easily prevented (smallpox vaccine) or treated (vitamin C for scurvy).

The current controversy regarding autism and vaccines is about our children's brains, so the stakes are high. The scientific fact about autism is that it is increasing in frequency. One in nine boys are now formally diagnosed,

with many others dysfunctional but without a formal diagnosis. Another sad fact is that we do not yet have a clear cause or successful treatment for autism. There are genetic, environmental and other factors that all have some bearing on the probability of becoming autistic. Parents have seen their children harmed when exposed to diseases such as measles and pertussis carried by other children. On the other hand, some parents believe that their children became autistic after receiving certain vaccines.

Censorship

Free speech on the internet is prohibited in numerous fascist countries and dictatorships. In the US, while we cherish free speech, we recognize that some information that is clearly harmful should be suppressed by policy. Websites promoting pedophilia and atomic bombs should be suppressed, transparently, but when it comes to guns, pornography and immigration, the lines become blurred. Some try to impose their beliefs on others.

Recently, YouTube, Facebook, Amazon, Google and Yahoo have removed the web pages of doctors, scientists and parents due to the beliefs or facts presented. When these voices are silenced, these big companies are acting as censors. Because they are rich, powerful and somewhat private, these companies can do this legally. However, as we have seen with the presidential election and with physicians required to provide informed consent, we now expect (and trust) these companies' websites to give us accurate and complete information. We do not want them altering or limiting information based on politics, economics or the personal beliefs of their managers.

History shows us that limiting free speech regarding a scientific question simply delays the truth. We need to hold our media accountable to keep suppressive policies transparent and reasonable if we want to preserve our free speech and fact-based progress. The solution to the current autism epidemic and other epidemics such as mass shootings will be delayed, not solved by such suppression.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. **This educational material may not be used to influence medical care without supervision by a licensed practitioner.**
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3. Dr. Cheikin's website has related articles such as "Neurotransmitters", "Un-Diagnosis" and many others.

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Famous Medical Controversies	
Discovery	Year(s)
Circulation	1500's
Scurvy	1700's
Smallpox	1800's
Hand washing	1870's
Pellagra	1930's
Stomach Ulcers	2005
Autism	??