

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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“Vaccines: Is there a Vaccine Court?”

Reportedly, children receive roughly 30 plus vaccination doses by school age and this has prompted heated debate about safety issues, including association with paralyzing diseases, altered brain development and autism. Issues of safety revolve around the mercury preservative, thimerosal and the use of so-called "attenuated or weakened" viruses. In addition to the common vaccines for diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, measles and mumps, drug companies are hurriedly working on vaccines to treat malaria, tuberculosis, Alzheimer's, AIDS, pandemic flu, genital herpes, urinary tract infections, grass allergies, and traveler's diarrhea. Vaccines are huge money makers. A 2011 report showed, "One in six American children now has a developmental disability - a 17% increase over the past decade, driven largely by increases in autism and ADHD." Many are not aware that there is a "vaccine court" in the US, devoted to hearing injury cases believed to be from vaccines. At least two parents who filed lawsuits against vaccine companies were awarded millions of dollars in compensation. This prompted vaccine manufacturers to threaten to stop producing certain vaccines if the litigation continued. Then, rather than forcing vaccine makers to produce safer vaccines, Congress passed the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act, which shielded the vaccine makers from any liability related to their products. Still, American taxpayers pay the costs of compensation and not the vaccine makers, through an account funded by a 75-cent surcharge on every vaccine given. Consequently, not only are the vaccine makers not held at fault but they do not pay a cent to those injured by vaccines. Yet, in 2014, there were 542 claims to the vaccine court and of these, 365 were compensated for a total of \$202 million, with settlements ranging from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars. But, very few of these claims are publicized or disclosed to the public. According to an investigative journalist, in March 2015, the government removed the latest vaccine injury court statistics from a publicly reported chart. So, people are being kept in the dark as it relates to what is happening in the vaccine court. The good news is that more parents and doctors are adopting a more individualized approach to vaccinations in direct response to overall vaccine safety concerns.

In the America that I love, vaccines command high profit margins but long term patient safety should be the bottom line. Vaccines have yielded health benefits but profits should not be their guiding principle. There has been a sharp increase in vaccine court victories for people claiming they or their children were injured or killed by vaccines. Information can be found at a government vaccine website, which is run by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Please check it out.

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