
Counselling the Vaccine Hesitant Parent

Western Canadian Immunization Forum

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Factors in Parental Decision Making

- Is the vaccine is safe ?
- Is the threat that the disease poses is important ?
 - How common is the disease?
 - How severe is the disease?
- Is the vaccine effective ?
- How much does it cost?



Factors Contributing to Vaccine Hesitancy

- Success of vaccine programs “out of site, out of mind”
 - “Vaccine fatigue”
 - Exposure to anti-vaccine websites
 - Power of celebrity
 - Traditional media seeking to present a “balanced approach”
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“If you tell a big enough lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed”. Adolf Hitler

The Daily Currant  76k

Health

Jenny McCarthy: ‘Lemon Juice Cures Ebola’

10.15.14

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Jenny McCarthy claimed today that drinking large amounts of lemon juice cures ebola.

In an interview on *The Today Show* this morning, the former Playboy model and renowned medical expert was asked her opinion of the deadly hemorrhagic fever, which has devastated West Africa and threatens the U.S. and Europe.

Common concerns regarding immunization

- ‘Too many shots will overload the immune system’
 - Child is too young to be vaccinated
 - Natural infection is more “natural” and better
 - Vaccine safety
 - Side effects of the vaccine
 - Worry about additives
 - Concern that the vaccine can cause the disease
 - Objection on moral and/or religious grounds
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Eight Step Approach to Respond to Parents Unsure of Immunization

Scott Halperin MD, The Canadian Journal of CME 2000

- Listen, Evaluate, and Categorize
 - Recognize Legitimate Concerns
 - Provide Context
 - Refute Misinformation
 - Provide Valid Information
 - Educate About Potential Consequences
 - Make a Clear Recommendation
 - Recognize That it is the Parents' Decision
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Listen, Evaluate

- Listen carefully
 - Ask parents in a nonjudgmental and nonconfrontational tone what they are most worried about
 - Determine what their understanding of the disease risks is
 - Validate why a parent may hold a specific belief about a vaccine, especially if it is based on misinformation or misunderstanding
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Listen, Evaluate, and Categorize

- Parents can generally be divided into:
 - Uninformed by educable
 - Misinformed but correctable
 - Well-read and open-minded
 - Convinced and content
 - Committed and missionary
 - Arnold Hoekstra, health care worker fired for refusal to get a flu shot, “ I would rather die than force my children to be vaccinated”
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Recognize Legitimate Concerns

- Emphasize that most adverse events are mild and self-limited
 - Address the issues of pain with immunization
 - Discuss less common, more severe but self limited side effects such as febrile seizures
 - Don't deny rare, severe adverse events but don't bring up spurious vaccine allegations that the parent has not mentioned
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Provide Context

- Discuss risk in easy to understand terms
 - Vaccines are 99.9999 % safe
 - Compare risk of natural disease with that of vaccination
 - e.g. risk of encephalitis from MMR is 1 in a million as compared to 1 in a thousand from natural infection
 - Let parents know what has happened in countries where immunization rates have fallen
 - Relate compelling stories of children damaged or killed by vaccine preventable diseases
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Refute Misinformation

- Know the current claims of the anti-vaccination groups and be able to demonstrate their fallacies
 - Be aware of confirmation bias
 - People who want to believe actively search for confirmation by ignoring contrary research
 - Primacy effect- preference for earlier information
 - It is very hard to “unscare” people
 - Persistence of discredited beliefs
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Provide Valid Information

- Inform parents about the rigor of the vaccine safety system
 - Review the vaccine schedule
 - Have available parent friendly literature and recommended websites
 - http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/vaccine_safety
 - <http://www.immunizebc.ca/>
 - <http://www.immunize.ca/en/vaccine-safety.aspx>
 - www.cdc.gov/vaccines
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Educate about Potential Consequences

- Parents often more concerned about committing harm by vaccination than allowing harm to occur should their child get natural disease
 - General good health, privileged socioeconomic status, breast feeding and eating organic food does not substantially decrease their risk
 - Make sure that parents understand the consequences of their child contracting the disease in question, both to themselves and others
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Educate about Potential Consequences

- Make sure that parents know that relying on herd immunity has limitations
 - A “wait and see” plan to vaccinate only in an outbreak situation is dangerous
 - Remind them that they have benefitted from vaccination, and ask them about how they would feel if their child suffered from a disease that they had been spared from
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Make a Clear Recommendation

- Health care provider's advice is the most important factor in parents' decision making process
 - "Vaccines are safe and effective, and serious disease can occur if your child and family are not immunized"
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Recognize that it is the parents' decision

- Dealing with parents who outright refuse immunization can be very frustrating

FEBRUARY 2, 2015

DAILY CARTOON: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2ND

BY EMILY FLAKE



e. flake

“If you connect the measles it spells out ‘My parents are idiots.’”

Recognize that it is the parents' decision

- By establishing a good trusting relationship over time, many parents will accept at least some vaccinations

Every Health Care Encounter is an Opportunity for Immunization !

