
Arguments Against Vaccination

Introduction

A vaccination is a quick and effective method that allows the body to naturally develop an immunological memory towards antigens and thus allow the immune system to readily respond to the antigens present on viruses and bacteria which are pathogens. This works by various techniques, therefore there is a variety of vaccinations a person can receive: live attenuated, inactivated, subunit, toxoid, conjugate, DNA vaccines, recombinant vector vaccines (How Vaccines Work | PublicHealth.org, 2020). However, whether it is the best procedure to provide immunisation is a modern discussion and therefore brings about questions on whether it should be mandatory. Here I will review gains and losses that arise from compulsory vaccination.

Vaccination

The most frequent period when the public receive vaccination in their lifetime is when they are young and typically begin receiving treatment weeks after they are born (Childhood immunization schedule for 2020 by age | HealthPartners Blog, 2020). Babies are provided colostrum and immunoglobulin (antibodies) that help fight against infection and this is due to the fact these are passed on from breastmilk which gives short-term immunisation to the baby. However, this is not enough protection, and the immune system is undeveloped so they are susceptible to many life-threatening diseases which is a major cause of infant mortality rates so much so that roughly 4 million infants die each year due to infection under the age of 6 (PrabhuDas et al., 2011). According to the World Health Organisation, of all under-five deaths 41% are in the neonatal period which is the infants first 28 days and deaths are significantly more likely to happen in middle/low income countries WHO | Newborn death and illness. This highlights the importance of giving necessary healthcare. One of the main goals of mass vaccination is herd immunity which is where the majority of a population is immune to a particular disease therefore incapable of passing on the disease onto weaker individuals (the elderly, those with underlying medical conditions etc.) who may be more at risk to the disease in an outbreak. Herd immunity requires a large amount of compliance in order to decrease the number of individuals capable of transmitting a virus, for example in order to halt spread of measles, a minimum of 93-95% of the population must be vaccinated. This may be harder to achieve through individual vaccination where it is this procedure becomes optional. In recent years, the numbers of vaccination done have decreased in locations such as the United States due to a rise of inaccessibility and misleading information which led to outbreaks (Rodrigues and Plotkin, 2020). The Disney Land measles outbreak of January 2015 which brought light to the alarming reverse of the eradication of measles. Figure 1 shows that there was a large amount of cases in 2014 which could be the cause of this at the start of 2015. The risks of vaccination were increasingly questioned whether the benefits outweigh the possible alarming side effects which has led to fuel the arguments of vaccine denialists.

Arguments against vaccination

“The era of vaccine refusal” came from public fright of vaccinations. A substantial cause of

hysteria towards vaccination is due to many becoming concerned of the possible side effects. A media bombshell that made many parents doubt the safety of vaccination was from countless articles and newspapers declaring that vaccines could lead to autism or brain cancer and with its momentum famous celebrities and influencers follow this movement beginning to oppose vaccines causing a surge of hesitancy. False information spread across news outlets for ratings caused short and long-term reluctance to every vaccine. However, studies show that there is no correlation between vaccination and autism, and it was dismissed as a conspiracy theory that arose from Andrew Wakefield who had done no prior research before his speculation so his 1998 papers were deemed fraudulent. This event resulted in large delay of vaccine uptake increasing risk amongst populations in various locations despite such allegations being meaningless. Some may reflect on this event as a reason to why vaccination should be mandatory, as many of the public are easily put in danger by groundless accusations however forcing the public could cause even more mistrust towards the government.

On the other hand, some may argue that it is unethical to vaccinate a child without parental decision and it should be up to parent/guardian to decide on how they are treated. As many vaccines occur when children do not have the capacity to give any consent to life-changing medicine, choices are usually made by the parent/guardian. Some citizens believe it is right let their child develop an immune system naturally without being overloaded with chemicals injected into their body, they claim that they can gather defence towards viruses by living a healthy lifestyle. If the child were to obtain a virus naturally, they would be much stronger in comparison McKee, C. and Bohannon, K. (2016). Nevertheless, others may say that it is wrong to allow parents to deny treatment that could possibly prevent death or suffering.

Compulsory vaccination can also cause conflict with religious individuals. Many with religious beliefs also contribute to the decrease of vaccine uptake as there is an increasing number of those who use religious reasons to legally avoid vaccination. One religious group that may be against cooperation are protestants. Protestant anti-vaccinators may argue that vaccination is “an act against divine providence” and receiving side effects from such vaccinations is a sign from God that that was a bad decision. Therefore, forced vaccination will lead to disrespecting their faith which causes ethical conflict. Though there are situations whether this has caused chaos, one case which accentuates the importance of vaccination was the outbreak of measles in The Netherlands which mainly affected a population orthodox protestant that had a first dose vaccination coverage significantly lower than the rest of the country (Med J, 2016) which questions if the consequences are justifiable.

Conclusion

In conclusion, mandatory vaccination may cause a rise of conflict amongst the public if it is in place as it may because it partially removes the right for parents to independently make choices for their children, change how others respect their religion and also decrease trust towards the government. However, the greater concerns of not abiding by this can lead to an increase of deaths globally and this is a significant consequence that cannot be ignored. It would be unjustified to put millions at avoidable risk of life-threatening diseases, therefore I believe it is right to make it compulsory.