

The Autism Crisis – April, 2012

How Many Children's Lives Will Be Stolen Before America Acts?

- The Centers for Disease Control just released the latest autism numbers from their ADDM network for children born in 2000.
- **Autism now affects 1 in 88 American 12 year-olds. 1 in 54 boys.**
- This represents a 25% increase over the prevalence in children born just two years earlier (in 1998) and a 71% increase over the children born only six years earlier (in 1994).

The prevalence of autism is rising at about 12% a year. That means:

- **The number of children with autism will double every 6 years.**
- **In 5 years, autism could affect 1 in 50 children or 1 in 31 boys.**
- **There will be at least one child with autism in every classroom in America.**
- Let's consider what that means in numbers of children affected:
- Approximately 4 million babies are born each year in the United States. That means that each year, at current rates, 45,454 children will be diagnosed with autism. That also means:
- **In 5 years, if we don't find a cause and rates continue to increase, 80,000 children per year will be diagnosed with autism. How many children have to be affected before our country takes action? 5 percent? 10 percent?**
- **Can anyone with a conscience claim that this isn't an epidemic?**
- **SafeMinds believes that most cases of autism are preventable and treatable. We demand action to protect our children.**

Inadequate Government Response

No New Money

- The epidemic of individuals with autism is not being addressed by the federal government. When Congress extended the Combating Autism Act last September, the gridlock in Washington ensured that there was no additional money added despite the dramatic growth in the number of people with autism.
- The annual funding for all autism research and services is about \$230 million. Given the CDC's past estimate of 730,000 people with autism under the age of 21, that works out to \$315 per person per year. That doesn't include the adults.

Federal Funding is not proportional to Autism's Impact

- For comparison, the National Institutes of Health spent the following on research in 2011:
 - \$169 million on Autism – which affects 45,454 US babies each year
 - \$79 million on Cystic Fibrosis – which affects 1,081 US babies each year
 - \$228 million on Pediatric AIDS – which affects 13,333 US babies each year
 - \$170 million on Pediatric cancer – which affects 800 US babies each year
- All of these are important, but given the long-term human and cost impacts and autism's rapid rate of growth, autism research is grossly underfunded.

Funding Priorities Are Wrong – Autism is Environmental

- Growth in autism rates this dramatic can only be driven by environmental factors.
- The majority of cases of autism are caused by environmental exposures coming before and/or after birth. This makes them preventable. Until we do a better job of eliminating the soup of toxic pollution our children are exposed to, increases in prevalence like this will likely continue. Autism has been associated with mercury, pesticides and air pollution.
- The largest twin study to date found that autism risk is 55-58% environmental and only 37-38% genetic.

- Yet, in 2009, funding for genetic causation research outweighed environmental causation research approximately 6 to 1. We will not find answers looking in the wrong place.

CDC Tracking Inadequate

- It collects data on 8 year-olds and then takes years to report on it. These new 1 in 88 numbers are based on 12 year-olds (born in 2000). We need data on 3 year olds.
- The CDC should go back earlier than the 1992 birth cohort which is when they started tracking autism. Their own data from Brick Township, NJ and a study from EPA researchers suggest that the period when autism rates really began to go up was 1988-1989.
- The Centers for Disease Control do not report severity levels. They do not report separate rates for autism and Asperger's syndrome. This limits the usefulness of the information for planning services.
- The new data released today tracked only 14 states and only parts of some of those states. Currently, that has dropped to 12 states in the ADDM network. Their system is record-based rather than true screening. We need nationwide rigorous surveillance.
- The CDC recently attached the funding for autism tracking to the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) which may be at risk if the Act is repealed. Surveillance this important should not be put at risk.

Vaccine Studies Cannot Be "Off the Table"

Study Proves That Autism Can Result from Vaccine Injury

- Last spring, a study in the Pace Environmental Law Review investigated VICP, our vaccine injury compensation program, and found 83 cases of autism among those that our government has compensated for vaccine-induced brain injury. The statement that "vaccines cannot cause autism" no longer holds water. At the same time, over 5000 cases brought by

parents of autistic children in the program have been turned away without help.

Most Vaccines Have Not Been Studied Regarding Autism

- Only 1 of the seven vaccines given in the first year of life (Hepatitis B) has been studied for associations with autism in children who received it vs. children who did not receive it or were delayed in receiving it. The study found a 3X relative risk of autism in the boys who received the vaccine at birth.
- When our babies are born pre-polluted, it makes good sense to evaluate the combinations of chemicals in vaccines like mercury, aluminum, and 2-phenoxyethanol and their effects on infants and children.
- The studies “proving” that thimerosal is safe have poor methodology and have been published by authors with conflicts of interest. Even so, thimerosal is associated with elevated risk of tic disorders and speech delays. Other studies support thimerosal’s toxicity at vaccine-level doses. Information received through the Freedom of Information Act showed significant associations between early thimerosal exposure and autism.
- The researcher, Poul Thorsen, who was instrumental in many of the thimerosal studies that claimed to show thimerosal’s safety has been indicted on fraud charges, but not yet arrested.

Autism Risk Outweighs the Combined Risk of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases in the United States

- Autism now affects 1 in 88 American children or 113 children per 10,000.
- Many parents of autistic children report regression after vaccination.
- The risk of death from **all** vaccine-preventable infectious diseases in the US, if we did not vaccinate at levels that provide “herd immunity”, is about 2 children in 10, 000 (up to age five).
- We need more research into populations that may be more susceptible to vaccine injury.

- It is time for the government to fund a large trial of vaccinated and unvaccinated children to see if there are higher autism rates among vaccinated children than among those who have never been vaccinated.

Lax Vaccine Safety – Vaccine Court Not Working As Intended

- In 1986, the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act removed all financial liability from vaccine manufacturers, thereby removing a primary incentive for companies to make the safest vaccines possible.
- Since 1986, our vaccine schedule has exploded from a total of 11 injections for 8 diseases to a total of 34 injections for 14 diseases by the age of 6.
- Approximately 80% of cases brought to the Vaccine Injury Compensation Program are denied compensation. This is often because the science to prove causation of certain injuries has not been done. The only way that a family does not have to prove what happened to their child is if the injury is a “table injury”- an established side-effect of a given vaccine. Since 1986, 9 vaccines have been added to the recommended schedule (some are for at risk populations or adolescents), but no table injuries are listed for 8 of them because the safety science has not been done adequately.
- The Institute of Medicine report on Vaccine Adverse Effects from August 2011 investigated 158 potential adverse outcomes from vaccines. Of these, 135 or 85% were found to have inadequate research to accept or reject a causal association. Of the 23 outcomes where the research was deemed adequate, 18 or 78% were found supportive of harm. Vaccines were cleared of safety concerns for just five of the outcomes considered where research was adequate.
- In the early 1980’s drug manufacturers were leaving the vaccine market due to injury lawsuits. Congress intended for the VICA to provide protection for manufacturers to maintain the vaccine supply, while at the same time establishing the VICP to compensate the injured. Unfortunately, the quick relief that Congress envisioned has turned out to take years for many families and to be futile for most.

- Vaccine safety advocacy groups are calling for hearings to reform the VICP. They are also demanding a separate federal agency in charge of vaccine safety as the Centers for Disease Control have the conflicting mission of maximizing vaccine uptake and also hold patents on several vaccines.