

Write here!

### Immunisation Debate

I was distressed to read the letter from Dr Deirdre Ahern (Issue 26). She appears to suggest taking away the right of free speech. It is a requirement by law that caregivers give "informed consent" to inoculations. How can we be informed if we only hear the edited version offered by the traditional branch of the medical profession.

It is a total falsehood to suggest an immunisation programme has had any effect on disease anywhere in the world. Thousands die every year in Third World countries supposedly of measles, smallpox, whooping cough etc but the real causes are starvation and poor hygiene.

It is interesting to note that the death rate from measles in the US dropped from 10/100,000 in the 1920s down to 1/100,000 in the 1940s and 0.5/100,000 in the 1950s. Vaccination was not introduced until the late 50s and the death rate has not dropped significantly since. In 1978 there were 24,954 cases of measles in the US, and in 1990 there were 19,117 cases in the first 36 weeks.

According to the Journal of the American Medical Association, Jan 26 1990 - Vol 263 No 4, I quote, "More than half of measles cases occurred among appropriately vaccinated children 5-19 years of age."

"A total of 3520 (51.2 per cent) measles patients had been vaccinated on or after their first birthday."

There is evidence to suggest that high vaccination rates may in fact reduce the effectiveness of vaccination. In 1987 there was a measles epidemic on the campus of the University of Albert. Ninety eight per cent had been vaccinated. One hundred and twenty babies of vaccinated mothers were tested for antibodies at 6 months of age and they showed nil immunity. Normally antibodies transferred at birth remain present for a year.

There are many questions which remain unanswered about vaccination in general and it is up to all of us to push for the answers.

David Glover  
Pahiatua

### Immunisation Plea

I am horrified at the attitude of those selfish parents who choose not to have their children immunised. Note that they make the choice, not their children.

As every parent will be aware, there is a serious measles epidemic in New Zealand which can only be the result of too few children being immunised. Did we not learn our lesson with the polio epidemic?

I have a 3½-year-old who is totally immunised, despite a reaction to the whooping cough vaccine. My 4-month-old baby is too young for the measles vaccination and has

therefore been placed at risk. At no stage would I ever risk my children's lives by not immunising them. My baby's life is at risk and I am too scared to take him out and am virtually housebound.

I urge all parents to examine their consciences and re-weigh the risks, as you may be the cause of your child being seriously ill, or worse still, the death and misery of many New Zealand children. I personally could never live with that thought and I sincerely hope the people to whom this is addressed feel the same.

Jacqueline Kinder  
Palmerston North

### Arthritis from Vaccine

When I was 19 I was given the rubella vaccine. Three weeks later I developed arthralgia, and was told that it was the result of my years as a gymnast, which I accepted at the time. At the age of 25 after I had got married, my American doctor did a blood test to check my rubella immunity because I was planning to get pregnant. He was very pleased as it came back with good levels of antibodies.

At two months pregnant I became very ill, so had a blood-test, and came out with some spots. A second blood test later verified that I had rubella. The doctor did not tell me at the time, because he felt that a re-infection was not as much of a problem as having it naturally. At the time I was very ill, and was really concerned. Our first son was born, and seems to be a very normal, very intelligent, albeit hyperactive child.

I was puzzled as to why it was that this arthralgia had turned to arthritis, and persisted, except when I became pregnant. We changed doctors, and when my new doctor went through the records, he spotted the second episode of rubella, and the fact that my arthritis had been especially bad the year after Ian's birth. He ran some tests, and sent the results to America to a Dr Aubrey Tingle in British Columbia. The results came back with a diagnosis of post-vaccination arthritis.

So for me what was the result of the vaccine? Antibodies, yes; plenty of them. Arthritis which was especially bad in the winter. And what's more I got rubella when I was pregnant.

I must say, however, that because of two wonderful Australian doctors, I no longer have arthritis. They recommended Vitamin C which they said would eliminate the virus antigen/antibody complexes which were causing the arthritis. Within a month, I was arthritis free, and continue to be, provided I regularly take Vitamin C.

Would I have another vaccine? Not on your life. I'd rather not trust to man's wisdom again.

Hilary Butler  
Tuakau

### Guilt-free Feeding

Like most modern mums I took it for granted that I would breastfeed. With my first son, breastfeeding started well but at 4 months he needed to have a supplementary bottle. This was an excellent combination as I had the