



Parents Must Make Informed Choices on Hepatitis B Vaccines

Recent newspaper articles have emphatically declared the requirement of hepatitis B injections prior to entering seventh grade. The articles were clearly skewed to inspire fear in readers' minds in an effort to coerce compliance with state and local governmental mandates, as vaccination rates are low.

It is critically important that the public be truthfully informed both about hepatitis B disease and the known and unknown risks of the vaccine. Without this risk information, citizens cannot exercise informed consent, which, according to the National Vaccine Information Center (NVIC), is a human right when an individual considers undergoing a medical procedure that could cause injury or death.

Contrary to the articles, hepatitis B is not common in childhood and is not highly contagious. Hepatitis B is primarily an adult disease transmitted through infected blood in high-risk populations. These people are primarily intravenous drug users or those involved in promiscuous heterosexual or homosexual activity, according to Centers for Disease Control Prevention Guidelines.

Is this a great risk for infants or seventh-graders? Its incidence is low in the United States and according to the Guide to Clinical Preventive Services, has been declining since 1975. **“Ninety-five percent of those infected recover completely,”** according to Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine (1994).

While Merck pharmaceutical company's vaccine sales reached \$1 billion in 1997, hepatitis B vaccine is being forced into the veins of all children without adequate proof of long-term safety or efficacy. Merck's 1993 product insert, which discussed studies proving safety, declared that the infants and children were only monitored for reactions for five days after injections.

Watch warnings

The Food and Drug administration did not require drug companies to provide scientific evidence that hepatitis B vaccine does not compromise the immune and nervous systems of children over months or years post-vaccination.

Merck warned, “as with any vaccine, there is the possibility that broad use of the vaccine could reveal adverse reactions not observed in clinical trials.”

According to NVIC, **“all vaccines stimulate only artificial, temporary immunity, and the length of immunity conferred by the hepatitis B vaccine and the future need for more booster doses later in life is not clear.”** The CDC prevention guidelines stated that “between 30% and 50% of persons who develop adequate antibody after three doses of vaccine will lose detectable antibody within seven years.” NVIC questions “if immunity only lasts seven years, then babies vaccinated with hepatitis B may be candidates for more shots at age 7.”

This could result in further exposures by junior high school and all this when, according to the Guide to Clinical Preventive Services, **the greatest incidence of hepatitis B occurs in the 20 – 39 year-old age group** and primarily affects those involved in high-risk behaviors.

The Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences published a report in 1994 noting that no controlled observational studies or controlled clinical trials have ever been held to evaluate **repeated reports that hepatitis B vaccine can cause Guillain-Barre syndrome, arthritis, multiple sclerosis and other diseases of the nervous system and sudden infant death syndrome.**

Not enough research

A major conclusion was that almost no basic science research as been undertaken to define at the cellular and molecular levels the biological mechanism of vaccine-induced injury and death. During the past decade many reports in international medical journals have discussed hepatitis B vaccine causing chronic immune and neurological disease in children and adults including lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, Bell’s palsy, diabetes mellitus, chronic fatigue and vascular disorders.

Unless your baby or teen is in a high-risk behavior population, I encourage you to arm yourself with the whole truth about the disease and the vaccine risks so that shot in your child’s arm isn’t a shot in the dark.

Don’t be intimidated into acting without full information. The last paragraph of the recent Fresno Bee article clarified that people in California may choose not to

vaccinate for medical, religious, or philosophical reasons. A signature on the back of the vaccination history form is all that is required. The article concludes by saying that this option is taken by less than 1% of the people.

If this is true, it is only because the vast majority don't know they have a choice nor do they understand the risks.

For more information, contact the National Vaccine Information Center at (800) 909-SHOT or online at www.909shot.com

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