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Should Measles Vaccination be Compulsory?

Measles vaccination has substituted one problem for another

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Supplementary to my earlier letter [1] it strikes me that public criticism of vaccine products may come a poor third in the spread of measles in comparison with failure of outreach and failure of the vaccine technology itself. In addition to the 1996 paper by Markowitz which I cited [2] I note a number of papers pointing to failure of immunity as a result of the programme [3-11].

Even with 100% coverage and three doses it seems unlikely that synthetic herd immunity is set to do anything but decline: meanwhile censuring and criminalising critics and dissenters is only distracting in a politically unpleasant way from the problem. I am personally grateful to the editor for her recent call for “civil discourse, and debate” [12].

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Notes

[1] John Stone, ‘Advocates of compulsory vaccination also need to acknowledge risks’, 6 June 2019, https://www.bmj.com/content/365/bmj.l2359/rr-0

[2] Markowitz LE, Albrecht P, Rhodes P, Demonteverde R, Swint E, Maes EF, Powell C, Patriarca PA., ‘Changing levels of measles antibody titers in women and children in the United States: impact on response to vaccination. Kaiser Permanente Measles Vaccine Trial Team.’, Pediatrics. 1996 Jan;97(1):53-8., https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8545224

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https://jcm.asm.org/content/55/3/735 "Of the 194 measles virus sequences obtained in the United States in 2015, 73 were identified as vaccine sequences (RJ McNall, unpublished data)".

[11] Rosen JB, Rota JS, Hickman CJ, Sowers SB, Mercader S, Rota PA, Bellini WJ, Huang AJ, Doll MK, Zucker JR, Zimmerman CM., 'Outbreak of measles among persons with prior evidence of immunity, New York City, 2011', Clin Infect Dis. 2014 May;58(9):1205-10. doi: 10.1093/cid/ciu105. Epub 2014 Feb 27

[12] Fiona Godlee, 'What should we do about vaccine hesitancy?',
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