

Physician Response to Parents Refusing Vaccines

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Random Survey

- 1004 AAP members
- 54% encountered refusal in prior year
- 39% would dismiss if all vaccines refused
- 28% would dismiss if parents refused selected vaccines
- Age, sex, years in practice irrelevant

Results II

- Dismissers valued DTP, MMR, HIB, IPV more than newer vaccines, compared to those who would continue to see family
- Dismissers point to lack of shared values as reason to ask family to seek other care
- Lack of trust

Accurately Reflect Reality?

- Acceptable response rate
- Accords with anecdotal information
- Somewhat > percent than 2001 AAP periodic survey
- Reflects intensity of societal debate
- Surveys can over- or underestimate action

Considered Reflection

- Depending on timing and geography, risks to individual children in US small
- Contemporary media provide widespread and sophisticated misinformation
- Benin et al* suggest many pediatricians cannot/will not take time to address fears
- *Benin AL, et al Qualitative analysis of mother's decision-making...Pediatrics 2005;117:1532-1541

Responsibilities in Dr-Pt Relationship

- Have a relationship: avoid preaching and/or condescension
- Foster mutual respect and trust
- Appreciate culture and value differences
- Take time to answer questions, discuss misunderstandings and misconceptions

Responsibilities II

- Ensure access to needed care, especially in emergencies
- Avoid driving families (child patients) to substandard care
- Intervene through public authorities when child's immediate health/safety threatened

Responsibilities III

- Educate families about health implications for other children exposed to unvaccinated individuals (esp. in childcare, epidemics)
- Maintain flexibility
- Avoid legalizing the situation
- Do not abuse social/power differences

Responsibilities IV

- Engage in public discourse
- Take opportunities to educate community-at-large
- Acknowledge conflicts of interest on the part of some individuals and organizations dependent on manufacturers' largess

Dysfunctional Lines in the Sand

- Scientific support for vaccine safety/utility misses fears and beliefs of many
- “Integrity of professional” ignores:
 - ◆ Differences among professionals
 - ◆ Lack of moral “gold standard” for favoring professionals’ values over those of laity

Unintended Consequences

- Heavy-handed “solutions” invite backlash
- Undermining trust in profession does not advance health and welfare of children
- Driving children to care by less qualified individuals puts patients at risk