

Vaccination Research Group- Final Report

The newspapers I focused my research on are: Bisbee Daily (Bisbee, Arizona), The Evening Herald (Klamath Falls, Oregon), The Evening World (New York, New York), The Washington Herald (Washington, D.C.), The Commoner (Lincoln, Nebraska), The Day Book (Chicago, Illinois), The Corpus Christi Caller (Corpus Christ, Texas) and The Public Ledger (Maysville, Kentucky). I attempted to pick a wide range of newspapers that represented rural and city areas. The newspapers had to have a large amount of articles from 1915 to 1922 that mentioned vaccine or vaccination. Also the newspapers had to be published daily but I made an exception with the regards to The Commoner because it provided great insight into the time period. After evaluation of these newspapers six arguments became apparent. The arguments are as follow: distrust in the medical community, vaccinations contaminate the body, compulsory vaccination, effects of disease, vaccinations are beneficial and finally vaccinations prevent natural selection

The first argument of distrust in the medical community can be found in articles originating from The Commoner, The Day Book, and The Public Ledger. These articles are all written from an anti-vaccination perspective. Physicians are described as being untrustworthy when they “make the well sick and cure diseases by making the sick sicker.”¹ It is clear that the author feels as though a

¹ “Vaccinopathy: Is it a Medical Delusion?,” The Commoner, March 1, 1919

physician's only desire is to generate more need for themselves by creating illnesses. This specific quote is from *The Commoner*, which is representative of William Jennings Bryan's views and all articles that I found regarding vaccination in this newspaper were skeptical of vaccination as well as completely against the practice. In other articles, physicians are described as greedy in an argument that they prey on people by inventing things to make money and vaccination is an example of this. It is also stressed that there is corruption in medicine because physicians merely purchase their degrees as a tool to generate more income.²

Lastly medical journals and speakers are exposed as being deceptive by withholding information regarding the dangers of vaccination because "they don't want people to know the truth."³ This quote shows that the medical community does not want the people to know the truth because they fear people will refuse to vaccinate therefore resulting in physicians losing their income. Overall the goal of these anti-vaccination articles was to create distrust in the medical community so that people begin to question the necessity to vaccinate as well as question the intentions of their physicians. Just as pro-vaccine articles attempt to scare readers into vaccinating, these arguments defaming physicians are hoping to instill the same fear into readers so they will question vaccination and ultimately refuse to vaccinate.

The second argument presents the fear that vaccines are not clean thus resulting in contamination of the body and blood. This argument is found in almost every newspaper I evaluated because during this time people were

² "Eugenic Marriage," *The Day Book*, February 3, 1915.

³ "Foot and Mouth Disease Caused by Virus," *The Public Ledger*, April 12, 1915.

unclear about how vaccinations were made. Also the idea that the cells from a cow are taken and then injected into a human caused controversy about the cleanliness of the cow and how it would affect humans. If the articles were pro-vaccine the author would stress the cleanliness of vaccination to remedy any concerns. For example vaccines were described as “pure, fresh and clean”⁴ and the necessity to keep the vaccination site clean is emphasized.

In contrast, if the article focused on an anti-vaccination perspective the author would describe vaccination as a dirty act that results in an increased risk of becoming ill. It was stated “vaccination is simply impregnation of the body and blood with a pus infection identical with septicemia or pyemia.”⁵ The idea of puss is gruesome and deters people from wanting that injected into their body. Vaccination is further described as “poison, infectious, contaminating and creating a blood-infection where none exists.” It is also stated that “what profiteth your babies if their God-made blood is periodically tainted with pus vaccine?” This statement further stresses that vaccination is dirty and against God’s wishes; as well as referring to those who get a vaccination as “victims of prevailing loathsome inoculations with vaccine and bacteria.”⁶

⁴ “Blackleg Vaccine,” The Evening Herald, March 8, 1917; “Things You Should Know,” The Evening World, August 8, 1915; “Things You Should Know,” The Evening World, August 7, 1915; “Mother and Child: When to Vaccinate the Baby,” The Evening World, October 15, 1919; “Untitled,” The Day Book, March 13, 1917; “Precautionary Measures to be Employed at Time of Vaccinating Hogs,” The Corpus Christi Caller, August 30, 1915; “Important Information About Hog Cholera,” The Public Ledger, March 23, 1915.

⁵ “Influenza, Epidemics and Vaccination,” The Washington Herald, November 20, 1918.

⁶ “Vaccinopathy: Is it a Medical Delusion,” The Commoner, March 1, 1919.

One article even states that physicians regard vaccination as “pollution of the blood.”⁷ This statement appeals to the readers who trusts their doctor and further creates distrust in the medical community. The statement suggesting that these physicians continue to recommend vaccination although they are aware that it taints the blood of the patient becomes worrisome to the reader. The fear that vaccinations are source of contamination can also be seen today with arguments that some vaccines cause Autism. These arguments have never been scientifically proven to cause diseases such as Autism yet, this fear continues to grow and is a main source of vaccine refusal.

The third argument presents conflicting views on whether states have the right to compel vaccination. This argument is also presented in every newspaper I evaluated. Many articles that discussed forced vaccination were in regards to the armed forces specifically against typhoid. For example “vaccinations were forced overseas against typhoid in armies,” “the military will vaccinate all soldiers against typhoid and will be re-vaccinated every five years,” “vaccine used to halt spread of typhoid epidemic.”⁸ Also it was stated that compelling vaccination resulted in small pox becoming virtually extinct.⁹

In addition school aged children were all required to be vaccinated if attending a public school.¹⁰ These children were required to prove vaccination

⁷ “Vaccination,” The Day Book, September 25, 1916.

⁸ “Well Supplied With Vaccines,” The Bisbee Daily, July 13, 1915; “Untitled,” The Washington Herald, October 17, 1915; “Untitled,” The Day Book, August 12, 1916.

⁹ “Health League-Col. L. M. Mans, Secretary State Department of Health, Delivers Interesting Address,” The Public Ledger, February 1, 1916.

¹⁰ “State Board Will Compel Vaccination,” The Evening Herald, January 28, 1929; “Things You Should Know,” The Evening World, August 5, 1915; “Public School Pupils Must be Vaccinated,” The Washington Herald, September 26, 1916;

with a certificate from their physician.¹¹ In New York, the Compulsory Education Law required proof of vaccination if not vaccinated by the school doctor and this law would be upheld by the Department of Education not the Department of Health.¹² Some parents did not wish to vaccinate their children and one man refused to vaccinate his daughter so she was asked to leave the school. The court upheld the decision and that child could not attend school until she was vaccinated.¹³ In some states such as Oregon, on the other hand the state could not require small pox vaccination they could only highly recommend it. But in cases of an outbreak of small pox the health board can close the schools that do not vaccinate their children.¹⁴ As exemplified above, each state had different legislations regarding vaccination so as the people were divided on the issues so were the states.

Other articles were strongly opposed to the state forcing vaccination. One article found that vaccination is proved to be the cause of epidemics and even the possible partial cause of the present flu and pneumonia epidemic. In fact it is stated, "compulsory vaccination should be condemned as un-American."¹⁵ Also another article calls for "all true Americans must help to estop government policy poisoning the blood."¹⁶ By deeming forced vaccination to be against the

"Vaccination Clinic Moves," The Washington Herald, September 17, 1921;
"School Boards Can Force Vaccination of All Scholars," The Corpus Christi Caller, October 14, 1915; "Notice," The Corpus Christi Caller, September 10, 1918.

¹¹ "Notice," The Corpus Christi Caller, September 10, 1918.

¹² "Things You Should Know," The Evening World, August 5, 1915.

¹³ "Vaccination Case Appealed," The Evening World, April 20, 1921.

¹⁴ "Recommend Children Be Vaccination," The Evening Herald, January 31, 1920.

¹⁵ "Influenza, Epidemics and Vaccination," The Washington Herald, November 20, 1918.

¹⁶ "Vaccinopathy: Is it a Medical Delusion," The Commoner, March 1, 1919.

rights of Americans it distracts the reader from the benefits of vaccination and puts the focus solely on their rights being violated.

The fourth argument was to remind the public of the devastating effects of diseases such as small pox in hopes of increasing vaccination compliance. One article utilized strong language to describe the deadliness of small pox by stating that small pox, “stalked unchecked through every land, slaying its millions, marring the faces and bodies of those who were not slain outright.”¹⁷ The article also describes Dr. Jenner as a hero for saving millions of lives. Through the use of vivid language the author is able to paint a picture of how deadly the outbreaks had been before Dr. Jenner created the small pox vaccination that put an end to the suffering of millions.

An article describes the discovery of the smallpox vaccination as, “it was as if an angel’s trumpet had sounded over the earth, thus spreading the good tidings into all lands that a preventive had been found against that scourge of humanity, smallpox.”¹⁸ Through this statement the author further stresses how horrible smallpox was by comparing it to the scourge of humanity, further describing the smallpox vaccine as a savior by preventing the continuing spread of the deadly disease.

Another article continues to stress the deadliness of smallpox and argues that if a child is not vaccinated then the mothers of those children are “guilty of criminal negligence.”¹⁹ This statement further pressures mothers to vaccinate their children in fear that if they do not they will be considered neglectful. One

¹⁷ “Fifty Dates You Should Remember,” The Evening World, March 8, 1915.

¹⁸ “Things You Should Know,” The Evening World, August 12, 1915.

¹⁹ “Mother and Child: When to Vaccinate the Baby,” The Evening World, October 15, 1919.

article stated that small pox is considered to “old fashion” yet it is back with thirty cases.²⁰ The purpose of this article was to again remind readers that smallpox can easily return if people are not routinely vaccinated. The author hopes to create continuous fear that seemingly extinct diseases can return, so people will submit to vaccination without question. In regards to typhoid, an article published on October 17, 1915 stated that in the previous year there were many severe cases of typhoid among unvaccinated soldiers in the army and three have already died.²¹ The author is attempting to remind the readers that an outbreak of typhoid can kill people and instill fear that those who are unvaccinated may die of a preventable disease.

The fifth argument stresses the benefits of vaccination to urge it but to not require it. Many articles strongly urge vaccination by stating that all “should be vaccinated” and the state is willing to pay the expense of vaccination.²² The local health department and doctors support these statements, for example, one article stated “Dr. John L. Norris, of the District Health Department, in a statement yesterday urged inoculation of the typhoid vaccine by Washington citizens as a preventative against typhoid fever.”²³ To further urge vaccination many articles present the benefits of vaccination. Some of the benefits listed are, “cutting down incidences,” “preventing grave complications,” “after inoculations the patients were immune from typhoid fever,” “a person having been inoculated had never been known to get the disease,” “travelers be vaccinated to prevent the spread

²⁰ “Some Smallpox Here,” The Washington Herald, July 5, 1918.

²¹ “Untitled,” The Washington Herald, October 17, 1915.

²² School Board Endorses Vaccination for Typhoid,” The Evening Herald, September 22, 1917; “Notice,” The Evening Herald, January 11, 1919.

²³ “Doctor Warns of Typhoid: Health Officer Urges Inoculations as Preventative Against Malady,” The Washington Herald, August 14, 1920.

the disease," "vaccination are recognized as efficient in prevention and treatment of communicable diseases."²⁴

Another way to support the argument that vaccinations are beneficial is through the use of statistics. "Statistics and the practical results are, of course, overwhelmingly in favor of the continuance of the system."²⁵ Other articles present large numbers to exemplify the need to vaccinate, "at a single picnic it is possible to drink enough typhoid germs to supply two doctors and three nurses with weeks of employment; 3,000 infected with smallpox, and a cold vaccine was created in England due to annual expense of \$250,000,000."²⁶ The use of statistics and large numbers supports the argument that vaccinations are beneficial and to further urge readers to voluntarily vaccinate themselves and their families.

The final argument is that vaccination prevents natural selection. The argument is primarily found in articles published in *The Day Book* and *The Commoner*, all articles primarily discrediting vaccination. Vaccination prevents natural selection because it allows those who should have died to continue to live and breed, propagating their inferiority. Without vaccination "savages the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit vigorous state of health." Furthermore, "there is reason to believe that

²⁴ "Influenza Listed for Modifies Quarantine," *The Evening Herald*, December 23, 1918; "Inoculate Penn. Athletes: Rowing Coach Fears Another Attack of Typhoid," *The Evening World*, January 14, 1915; "Doctor Warns of Typhoid: Health Officer Urges Inoculations as Preventative Against Malady," *The Washington Herald*, August 14, 1920; "Health Official Declares Travelers Should be Made to Submit to Vaccination," *The Corpus Christi Caller*, December 10, 1918; "What Gov. Lowden's Consolidation Bill Means- Department of Public Health," *The Day Book*, February 26, 1917.

²⁵ "Untitled," *The Washington Herald*, October 17, 1915.

²⁶ "A Form of Health Insurance," *The Day Book*, May 26, 1916; "3,000 Smallpox Cases Rage in Germany-Food Hoarding," *The Day Book*, March 23, 1917; "Vaccine For Colds Popular in England," *The Corpus Christi Caller*, October 7, 1919.

vaccination has preserved thousands who from weak constitutions would have succumbed to smallpox. Thus the weak members of civilized societies propagate their kind."²⁷ Basically vaccination saves the weak to continue to breed thus creating another generation of evolutionarily unfit people. This idea is exemplified in the practice of eugenics that promotes "fit people" to reproduce and defective people to be sterilized to prevent reproduction.²⁸

In conclusion, the arguments presented reflect the ideologies of those living during 1915 to 1922, as well as controversies that are still seen today. In regards to quantity there seemed to be a greater amount of informative articles that had somewhat positive views on vaccination. But the anti-vaccination articles did utilize stronger language and imagery, so these articles were largely more effective in potentially deterring vaccination. Overall, *The Commoner* had the largest number of anti-vaccination articles mainly because the newspaper is representative of William Jennings Bryan's skeptical views of vaccination. All the newspapers described varying ideologies regarding forced vaccination depending upon the state, which can still be seen today. Also all the newspapers presented the fear that vaccines create contamination, another issue seen today. The use of fear to motivate vaccination or deter it is also used today in the media and documentaries regarding vaccination.

²⁷ "Untitled," *The Commoner*, April 1, 1921.

²⁸ "Eugenic Marriage," *The Day Book*, February 3, 1915.