Enforced Inoculations

Many diseases could make a comeback if people stop getting vaccinated.

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Although vaccinations are not federally mandated, all 50 states require that children get inoculated against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, measles and chickenpox. However, according to the most recent information available, all 50 states allow medical exemptions, 47 authorize religious exceptions and 17 absolve kids from vaccinations for philosophical reasons. Meanwhile, folks continue to debate whether vaccines are safe for children, adolescents and adults and whether immunizations should be required to protect against outbreaks of disease.

Since ancient times, people have used inoculation techniques against communicable diseases. Indeed, vaccines are responsible for eradicating or eliminating many infectious illnesses that triggered epidemics that killed millions of individuals of all ages.

When a disease is eradicated, the illness no longer exists anywhere in the world. Elimination of a disease, on the other hand, ends its presence in a specific region. Vaccination programs that drive high rates of inoculation have been responsible for both results, according to the World Health Organization. (Those opposed to vaccines, however, give credit to clean water and better sanitation in communities.)

It should come as no surprise that there are numerous examples of possible good and bad outcomes associated with the use of these prophylactic medicines.

Besides the eradication and elimination of infectious diseases, one of the most compelling arguments in defense of vaccinations is that inoculating enough people can immunize population groups—a concept known as “herd immunity”—and stop outbreaks of illness from decimating a community. Proponents also stress that vaccines can save lives, adverse reactions are rare and major medical organizations endorse their safety profile.

A key point voiced by opponents of vaccinations is that these medicines might cause unknown side effects because the ingredients they contain may be harmful. In addition, many folks believe that governments shouldn’t be allowed to make medical decisions for individuals and that pharmaceutical companies can’t be trusted to make and regulate safe vaccines.

Truly, it’s difficult to dispute the validity of some of these concerns. But vaccines have made the world a safer place. Smallpox has been eradicated (to date, this is the only infectious illness we’ve

said goodbye to globally) as has polio (declared eradicated in the United States in 1979). And diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, measles and chickenpox have effectively been eliminated in most countries through widespread vaccination.

But these diseases could make a comeback if people stop getting vaccinated. This is because if one or two cases of disease are introduced into a community where most people are not vaccinated, outbreaks will occur, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I'd say this is enough reason to consider making vaccines mandatory.

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