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## *Health*

### **Autism + vaccines = tax dollars**

**By Evelyn Pringle**

Online Journal Contributing Writer

June 17, 2005—We are on the verge of a welfare disaster in this country. Eighty percent of autistic children are under the age of 17. In a few short years, the states are going to be forced to provide support for an overwhelming number of disabled autistic adults.

"The costs will be in the trillions," according to Ann Dachel.

Ann should know. She is a special education teacher, a member of the National Autism Association, and the mother of a boy with autism and a daughter who developed epilepsy after receiving a Hepatitis B vaccine.

Thimerosal is a mercury-based preservative that for many years was added to childhood vaccines to boost drug company profits. In the 1990s the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) added more and more thimerosal containing vaccines to the mandatory vaccine schedule without adding up the cumulative amounts of mercury that children were receiving from the vaccines.

Finally, in 1999, after watching the dramatic rise of autism and other neurological disorders, officials at the CDC and Food & Drug Administration (FDA) realized that a fully vaccinated infant was receiving up to 125 times what the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considered safe for mercury exposure.

Because half the officials involved were on the payrolls of the drug companies they were charged to regulate, they have never ordered the pharmaceutical industry to stop using thimerosal. In fact, the product is still used in some vaccines. Last year's flu vaccine had a mercury content eight times the EPA's safe limit and it was recommended for six-month-old babies and pregnant women.

The generation of children poisoned by vaccines during the 1990s is now reaching puberty and if the Bush administration is successful in blocking lawsuits against the vaccine makers that caused this epidemic of neurological disorders, taxpayers will be left holding the bag and a heavy bag it will be.

The theory of mercury toxicity and autism is not promoted by parents only. Its been verified by such esteemed biochemists as Andrew Hall Cutler, PhD, and Boyd Haley, the chemistry department chair at the University of Kentucky. A 2000 study by Sallie Bernard of Safe Minds, a nonprofit autism awareness organization, and her colleagues, titled "Autism: a novel form of mercury poisoning" documents about 100 matching symptoms.

The transcript of a closed meeting in 1999 that was leaked to the press, attended by officials from drug companies and the CDC and FDA, reveals how the 52 vaccine policymakers at the meeting discussed ways to deal with statistics showing that children given mercury in vaccines had a much higher rate of autism, attention deficit and other disorders.

On August 18, 2003, Dr Leonard G Horowitz, warned members of the congressional committee at a Government Reform Hearing on Vaccines as a Risk Factor For Autism, "the great and grave likelihood

that disease prevention through vaccinations is violently backfiring—dramatically increasing mortality and morbidity especially among America's youngest citizens."

Horowitz cited the dangers of our nation's "most established, generally accepted, public health practice of vaccination, and its links to skyrocketing rates of autism and brain damage in children."

This public health professional by training, and independent investigator with expertise in medical sociology and infectious disease research, told Congress, "I have unfortunately, over the past two decades, grown accustomed to instances of poor decision-making, gross negligence, and downright cover-ups in safety oversight and pharmaceutical industry control in the vaccine arena," Horowitz said.

In 2002, the research team of David and Mark Geier released a study, based on tens of millions of doses of vaccines given to children in the US during the 1990s, that presented the first epidemiologic evidence that associated the increase in thimerosal from vaccines with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Professor Lynn Adams of Radford University, a speech-language pathologist who specializes in autism, says a 1999 study determined that the average child received 33 doses of 10 different vaccines by the age 5. She claims the multiple shots could "flip a genetic switch" in children predisposed to autism.

Lisa Blakemore-Brown, a psychologist in the UK, also maintains that thimerosal is the cause of autism, and suspects it is also the culprit involved in a wide variety of other health problems showing up in children these days.

According to Blakemore, the current autism epidemic did not occur earlier because children "were given single vaccines with single amounts of mercury," she says, "but with the introduction of triple vaccines the amount of mercury contained within the preservative was multiplied and the cumulative effects are only just now being discovered by the public."

### **Parents Struggle With The Burden**

Laura Bono is the mother of an autistic child and she wants the public to consider the latest research pointing to the mercury-vaccine link. For instance, researcher Mady Hornig recently announced the results of a study where mice were given thimerosal at the level of the childhood immunization schedule and began exhibiting autistic behavior.

Laura cites a study where toxicologist Dr Jill James, a former FDA researcher, found a problem with autistic children's methylation which made it difficult for their bodies to rid themselves of mercury. Laura notes the findings of Dr Richard Deth that, once in the body, thimerosal shuts down the detoxifying methylation process.

Laura reveals how her son Jackson experienced a four-month regression beginning days after receiving shots. He received HiB (with 25 mcg. of mercury), DT (with 25 mcg. of mercury), oral polio, and measles-mumps-rubella. All totaled, he received 50 mcg. of mercury, three dead viruses and four live viruses. The 50 mcg. of mercury was on top of the 75 mcg. of mercury he had already received in his first year of life through one DPT and two other DT shots. The 50 mcg. of mercury he received in one day was 44 times the EPA exposure limit. He would need to weigh 550 pounds on that day to process that much mercury. He weighed just 25 lbs. The total amount of mercury from 2 months old to 16 months was 139 times the recommended EPA exposure levels.

"My outgoing, social, verbal child was a shell of his old self," Laura said, "Jackson's body was still here. But his personality—what made Jackson his smart, loving self—was gone. The sick body replaced the well one. The sleeping child was replaced by one who would awake startled after a few hours and not go back to sleep all night. The one who had a healthy appetite was replaced by one who became picky and whittled his foods down to one or two. The happy child was replaced by an unhappy one. The child who at one time didn't miss a thing and was the life of the room became distant and preferred to be alone. The

one who was developmentally ahead of the crowd began making strange noises and exhibiting odd behaviors. The child God gave us was gone," Laura said.

Andrian Prokofiew of New Jersey has a son who was developing normally until he acquired autism at 17 months after receiving 20 some vaccinations containing thimerosal. Within weeks of the last three vaccinations given in the same visit, "he lost all speech for 3 years, did not even look at me or know who I was. He screamed for two weeks, his ears turned red, his eyes dilated and he began to spin, flap his hands and bang his head," she said.

It took more than three years to find out what happened to him medically. Andrian says she was horrified to find out the pharmaceutical companies gave bonus dollars for each vaccine given.

"Words alone cannot express how devastating this disorder is for the family and child, emotionally as well as financially," she said.

Dr Allen Clark, a licensed physician for 30 years, has a son who developed severe neurodevelopmental symptoms (diagnosed as Asperger's an autism spectrum disorder) at age 7½ after receiving a routine influenza vaccine containing 25 micrograms of Thimerosal, a dose which the EPA would calculate that would be safe only for a 550-pound adult. The doctor's son weighed only 50 pounds at the time he was vaccinated.

Nancy and Tim Hokkanen are parents of Andy Hokkanen, age 6. Andy was exposed to mercury before birth from his mother's tooth fillings, which are 50 percent mercury, and from RhoGam shots for Rh factor incompatibility. After birth Andy also received thimerosal from the mandated childhood vaccinations.

Tim's health insurance has covered much of the cost of behavioral therapy for Andy, but for about nine months they were on medical assistance, which picked up many co-pays. They estimate that their insurance company was billed about \$100,000 for therapy so far.

Linda Weinmaster has a 13-year-old son who also met with mercury poisoning before birth in the form of a mercury-containing RhoGAM shot that Linda received during her 28th week of pregnancy, along with his childhood vaccines. He now suffers from a host of medical problems that require care.

Linda tell how her son's medications cost over \$6,500 per month. Right now, insurance covers his meds less deductibles but not his vitamins which run about \$300 per month.

A veteran of the United States Air Force, Kendra Pettengill is a widowed mother of a child with autism.

Kendra is annoyed that anyone would believe that there is not an epidemic of autism and could claim that it previously went undiagnosed. "The claim is better diagnosis," she says, "as if parents, teachers, and doctors 10 or 20 years ago wouldn't have noticed our spinning, rocking, flapping, head banging, self-biting, children who can't speak and live in their own little worlds."

"It is an insult, a slap in the face to parents to claim it is only better diagnostics that recognized our children," Kendra notes, "A parent 10 years ago would have been just as terror stricken by their child's condition as I was and would have demanded a reason just as I did."

Kendra's insurance company will not pay for her daughter's medical therapy, the diet, or ABA therapy. In fact, once autism is diagnosed they can refuse to pay for a doctor's visit for the flu if your doctor checks the little autism box on your insurance sheet, Kendra says.

"Every organization I contacted denied me assistance, as they say my \$30,000 a year income is too much to qualify," Kendra said. "A good solid ABA program can cost more than that, per year," she added.

"I have sold my house, spent my retirement, lost my medical insurance," Kendra says, "all to save my child from a life of hopelessness."

According to Kendra, her entire family is affected by her daughter's autism, "my parents even sold their house and moved by us to help out," she said.

Bob Ashburn and his wife Jamie are from Ohio and they have two children with autism spectrum disorder.

Their son, Kyle, who is now 9, was the first to be diagnosed with autism. In many respects they say he was the perfect baby because he was so easy to get along with and yet there was something strange about him that they couldn't pinpoint. They originally thought that Kyle might be deaf.

When he was about 15 months old, the family was eating at McDonalds when an alarm went off. Everyone in the place reacted to the noise except Kyle, he just kept sat there eating his french fries.

At first the Ashburns thought their daughter Kris, was just shy, and had strange habits, like regular hand washing and needing everything to be consistent. For instance, she needs to sit in the same seat in the car and needs to sleep with her same stuffed animals each night.

Kris is now 14 years old and is very artistically talented and has a great reading level. She can handle regular school but she really needs to have time to herself when she gets home and usually hides in either the bathroom or her bedroom for about an hour reading before she can face the world again.

The Ashburns worry about what kind of future their children will have, especially Kyle who has very few social skills and so many post-reactions to any interactions of a negative sort with people that they don't know how he can live in society.

When Kyle and Kris get upset they become violent and hit their parents, so the Ashburns have had to change their entire lifestyles so that everything is as consistent as possible and that transitions are made with lots of preparation.

Nothing, not even a quick shopping trip for a carton of milk, they say, can be done on the spur of the moment without some sort of violent reaction from either one or both of the children.

Jennifer Thompson tells how for a period of time her autistic Zack developed obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) type behaviors about his clothing. "He would only wear certain clothes. No long sleeved shirts, only long pants, and they had to be tucked in!. He would only wear shirts that had buttons. This was an obsession. You did not dare think you could make him do otherwise or he would go into an extreme meltdown. And I know most parents out there understand what a 'meltdown' is."

According to Laura Bono, "What is measurable is the financial toll that this medical crisis takes on families. After the vaccines at 16 months old, Jackson's medical and therapy needs began taking every bit of money we had saved or ever would have saved."

"The total we have paid for Jackson's medical, nutritional and private therapy expenses so far," she says, "is roughly \$685,000 since August 1990. That is approximately \$53,000 per year."

In addition to medical costs, most autistic children cannot be left alone and must be looked after and cared for non-stop every day of the year. Unless these kids and their families get the financial help that they deserve from the vaccine makers, the entire burden will eventually fall to the taxpayers and the cost will reportedly exceed \$2 million dollars per child.

Maybe that will make people wake up and listen.

*Evelyn Pringle is a columnist for Independent Media TV and an investigative journalist focused on exposing corruption*

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