

Health

Thimerosal and autism: David Kirby's '*Evidence of Harm*'

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June 29, 2005—David Kirby's new book, "Evidence of Harm" is a must read for anyone seeking to understand the connection between autism and childhood vaccines containing the mercury-based preservative thimerosal. The book examines the political and legal side of this travesty and presents information that cannot be disputed.

The book is a result of a thorough investigation and is by no means an anti-vaccine campaign. But most importantly, it's obvious that Kirby has no ax to grind.

"I was 100 percent unfamiliar with this story right up until November of 2002," Kirby says, "I had never met a person with autism in my life and I had never heard of thimerosal,"

"And I had certainly never heard of any connection between any form of mercury and autism," he adds, "although I did know mercury was not good for you. But I don't think I realized the extent to which it could do damage in your body."

"Growing up in school," Kirby said, "I have tried . . . I have searched my brain going back class by class, trying to think, 'Could that kid have been autistic?'"

"But, I have seen autistic kids and no," he said, "I don't believe I had ever met anybody—certainly no one who was diagnosed."

For people who insist that there is no epidemic and that it is just better reporting and better diagnostics, "I really would like to pose the question to them that Mark Blaxill, from Safe Minds, asks," Kirby said, "Where are all those people? Where are the one in 166 autistic adults? We can't find them."

The epidemic is real and politicians know it. On June 18, 2004, Representative Dave Weldon, MD, (R-FL) took to the floor of Congress and told the members, "I would like to take this time to address what I consider to be a very growing problem, the epidemic of autism and neurodevelopmental disorders that are plaguing our nation.

"In January of this year, the Department of Health and Human Services sent out an autism alarm to the nation's pediatricians. In this alarm, they stated that one in every 167 children is being diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. I will repeat that. One in every 167 children being born in the United States today is being diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder. Furthermore, one in seven children is being diagnosed with either a learning disability or a behavioral disability.

"Mr. Speaker, something dreadful is happening to our youngest generation, and we must sound the alarm and figure out what is going on with our children," Weldon said.

According to Weldon, "autism was once in America a rare and infrequently seen condition. I went through four years of medical school, internship, residency, and years of private practice and practice within the

military and had not seen one single case. I have seen case after case in my congressional district over the last seven years, a disease that I had never seen before."

Weldon told the committee, "The number one question has been whether neurologic problems were caused in some children by the high levels of a mercury containing additive that was included in our vaccines in the 1990s. This mercury containing additive is called thimerosal, and in the 1990s, infants and unborn children were exposed to significant amounts of mercury at a most critical point in their development."

Ironically, Republican lawmakers are openly blaming thimerosal and seeking to have it banned. In addition to Weldon, Senator Roy Holand (R-Missouri), also a physician by training, identified thimerosal as the culprit and got Missouri legislators to prohibit its use in childhood vaccines in his state.

"As a physician, I've been concerned about the rising levels of autism, and the more I've learned about thimerosal, the more convinced I am that it causes neurological damage," said Holand. "Mercury has no place being injected into children."

Evidence of Harm examines the politics involved and reads like a mystery. Kirby weaves together the determined efforts by parents to force attention upon autism; the conflicting scientific evidence regarding thimerosal; and the behind-the-scenes maneuverings that led to an investigation by the Department of Health and Human Services into allegations of malfeasance on the part of employees at the CDC and the FDA.

Kirby is no stranger to investigative journalism. He has been writing extensively for The New York Times for the past seven years and was a foreign correspondent in Mexico and Central America from 1986 - 1990, where he covered the wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and the politics, corruption and natural disasters in Mexico. From Latin America, he reported for UPI, the San Francisco Examiner, Newsday, Arizona Republic, Houston Chronicle and the NBC Radio Network.

Kirby keeps up with all the studies by independent scientists. "The most important ones among them are the work of Jeff Bradstreet, Jill James, and Dr. Richard Deth, and others looking into this: Boyd Haley, of course, from the University of Kentucky. Mark and David Geier have looked more into the epidemiology than the biology of this," he adds.

"The bottom line of what their studies are showing," Kirby says, "is that autistic kids retain heavy metals at a much greater rate than normal kids; that they seem unable, in fact, to actually excrete it."

There is a treatment known as "chelation" that is showing some success when used to draw mercury out of the bodies of autistic children.

"Following chelation," Kirby reports, "autistic children excrete far higher levels of mercury than normal kids. And yet, in their baby haircuts, we're finding that normal kids have much higher levels of mercury in their hair," he said, "And that would then make sense, because they were excreting it properly; the autistic kids were holding onto it."

This theory is supported by research conducted by Dr. Mady Hornig which took different strains of mice—one strain which was genetically predisposed to have auto-immune disorders—and exposed them all to the same level of vaccines that children would have received.

In the sensitive group of mice, Hornig noticed autistic-like behavior and physiological development such as increased brain size that you see in autistic children. Of course as always happens to scientists who connect the dots on this issue, she has been attacked for the study.

According to Kirby, people said, "How can you tell if a mouse has autism or not?"

But he explains, "I'm not quite sure that was the point of the study. I think the point of the study was to show that certain members of the same species, with a genetic difference, will react differently to the same level of mercury exposure due to a genetic variance."

Which makes perfect sense. Those children whose bodies cannot rid themselves of mercury become autistic. The August 2003 International Journal of Toxicology study revealed that healthy children excreted eight times more mercury via their hair than did autistic children. In fact, the more severe a child's autistic symptoms, the less mercury was excreted in her hair, indicating that mercury also could be retained in the child's tissue, including her brain.

Thimerosal began to be slowly removed from vaccines in late 1999. "That means new vaccines started to be produced without mercury in them," Kirby said, "But as we know, all the vaccines on the shelf with mercury stayed on the shelves—there was never a recall."

According to Kirby, "We have no idea how long it took to use up all that mercury-containing vaccine, or even if it has all been used up," he said, "The OSC has said that there may be vaccine out there with an expiration date of 2005 that still contains the full amount of mercury."

"We don't know when those lots were released; we don't know where they were released; we don't know what kids in what part of the country were getting mercury and what kids were not post 2000," he warns.

The truth is there are still some vaccines out there that contain full doses of the thimerosal with expiration dates in the fall of 2005. They include:

Meningococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine (Aventis Pasteur) 10-dose Vial, lot UB505AA, expires 17 Jun 05, 25 micrograms of mercury per dose from thimerosal; Td Vaccine (Aventis Pasteur) 10-dose Vial, lot U1014AA, expires 2 Sept 05; 25 micrograms of mercury per dose from thimerosal; Tetanus Toxoid Absorbed Vaccine (Aventis Pasteur) 10-dose Vial, lot U1048BA, expires 8 Sept 05, 25 micrograms of mercury per dose from thimerosal; Tetanus Toxoid Vaccine (Aventis Pasteur) 15-dose Vial, lot U0775AA, expires 10 Mar 05, 25 micrograms of mercury per dose from thimerosal; Japanese Encephalitis Vaccine (Je-Vax - Aventis Pasteur) 3 x 1 mL Vials, lot EJN*196B, 35.7 micrograms of mercury per dose from thimerosal; Td Vaccine Mass. Department of Health, 7.5 mL Vial, lot Td-102, expires 21 May 2005, 8.3 micrograms of mercury per dose from thimerosal; Influenza Virus Vaccine (Fluzone - Aventis Pasteur) 5 mL Vial, 25 micrograms of mercury per dose from thimerosal; Pediatric DT Vaccine (Aventis Pasteur) 5 mL Vial, 25 micrograms of mercury per dose from thimerosal.

As late as 2003, a review of the Physician's Desk Reference showed that three childhood vaccines were still being made with full doses of thimerosal. Diphtheria-Tetanus-acellular-Pertussis (DTaP) manufactured by Aventis-Pasteur in multi-dose vials contained 25 micrograms of mercury, Haemophilus-influenza-Type b (HibTITTER) in multi-dose vials manufactured by Wyeth contained 25 micrograms of mercury, and pediatric hepatitis B vaccine manufactured by Merck contained 12.5 micrograms of mercury. These vaccines represented about half of the childhood vaccines available for use in the US that year.

So we know that children may have been exposed to high levels of mercury in 2003. The total childhood mercury intake could have been more than 300 µg, according to the report in the Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons Spring 2003 issue.

The bottom line Kirby says, "We do know that kids were getting mercury right up through 2002, and perhaps later. We also know that it is in the flu shots," he adds.

On January 19, 2004, Mark Geier, the internationally renowned genetic researcher, discussed the flu vaccines with Kelley Omeara of Insight News, "There is something called the blood/brain barrier, which prevents some toxins from entering the brain. But ethyl mercury, which is what is in the influenza vaccine, crosses that barrier," he explained, "The influenza vaccine has 25 micrograms of mercury, which means

that to be at the recommended level of safety, and assuming that you get no mercury from any other source, you'd have to weigh 550 pounds to be safe."

The independent scientific research behind this public health crisis is mounting and the public is beginning to sit up and take notice of the media stories coming out that discuss the information contained in *Evidence of Harm*.

For instance, an article titled "Deadly Immunity," written by Robert Kennedy, Jr., was co-published this month in Rolling Stone and Salon. It mentions *Evidence of Harm* and discusses many of the issues detailed in the book.

Kennedy's article, tells how in June 2000, the CDC held a conference at the Simpsonwood Conference Center in Norcross, Ga., where doctors and scientists gathered to discuss a preliminary study that indeed found a statistically significant link between thimerosal and autism. From material obtained via the Freedom of Information Act, Kennedy cites quotes that leave no doubt that the meeting's purpose, ultimately, was to "whitewash the risks of thimerosal, ordering researchers to 'rule out' the chemical's link to autism."

The American Prospect hailed the article as a "blockbuster piece," and on June 21, while discussing the article with Kennedy, Joe Scarborough, on his MSNBC TV show, said that "there's no doubt in my mind that thimerosal causes, in my opinion, autism."

According to Dr. Geier, "the current epidemic of autism may well be the greatest iatrogenic epidemic in history. The damage already done to our society is already in the trillions of dollars. The damage of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and that of the AIDS epidemic pale when compared to the current epidemic of autism."

Or put another way, "To cling to a purely genetic explanation for autism is a desperate attempt to maintain the illusion that one lives in a comfortable and rational world where new chemicals and technologies always mean progress; experts are always objective and thorough; corporations are honest; and authorities can be trusted," says Harvard's Martha Herbert, "That human actions, rather than genes, might be responsible for compromising the health of a significant proportion of a whole generation is so painful as to be, for many, unthinkable."

The vaccine makers, along with their complicit government scientists and policy makers, have a lot to lose. If they don't find a way to keep the public from finding out that they knowingly allowed an entire generation of children to be damaged, the ensuing litigation will spread through the nation's court system like wild-fire and push tobacco and asbestos law suits down into small claims court.

The evidence presented in Kirby's book forces readers to face the unthinkable and leads to one conclusion: a generation of innocent and defenseless children were poisoned for profits by a greedy segment of society mistakenly entrusted to protect the common good of children all over the world.

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