

Empowering Parents to Become Vaccine Advocates

Increasing Immunization Rates through Social Norming

How are vaccine choices made?

- ▶ 95% of parents consult their “people network.”
- ▶ 10% of those following the CDC schedule and 12% of those not complying to the schedule **did not list doctors** in their top five “people network” options.

The Impact of Social Networks on Parents' Vaccination Decisions

Emily K. Brunson

Pediatrics peds.2012-2452; published ahead of print April 15, 2013,

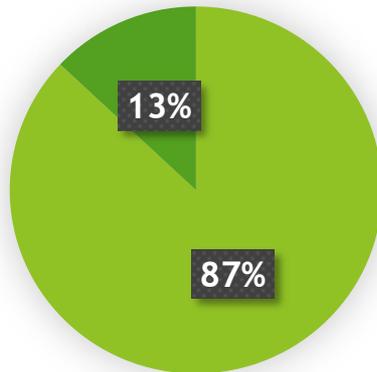
doi:10.1542/peds.2012-2452

Who comprises a People Network?

- ▶ Spouses are #1
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ Family
- ▶ Co-workers
- ▶ Parenting class instructors
- ▶ Doulas
- ▶ Midwives
- ▶ University Professors

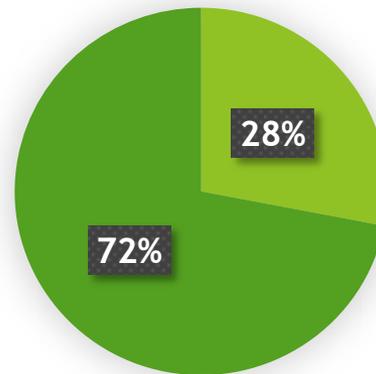
People networks are influential

Parents vaccinating on-schedule



- People network advising to follow schedule
- People network advising to disregard schedule

Parents delaying vaccines or foregoing some or all vaccines



- People network advising to follow schedule
- People network advising to disregard schedule

How people networks discourage vaccination

Maranda Dynda:

“[My midwife] told me about her experiences with vaccines and her seven children. **She claimed her one son had a negative reaction, causing him to regress and become autistic.** Now, she said, their family does not undergo any medical care except for chiropractic and homeopathics. I was fascinated, to say the least. The idea of not vaccinating was something I had never even heard of, let alone not taking your children to a doctor. But her kids seemed healthy, and she encouraged me to ‘do my research’ on the Internet. And so I did.”

How people networks encourage vaccination

Jenn Wampler

“My mom had scarlet fever when she was little and it weakened her heart. We have always been vaccinated. It was only re-enforced when we lived in Scotland and the vaccine rate isn't very high there. I had to watch many of my friends suffer through measles and the like; **it made me grateful my mom had us vaccinated.**”

Parents are still afraid of vaccines

- ▶ Less than 1% of children are completely unvaccinated
 - ▶ An even smaller percentage of those are the people we might consider “anti-vaccine.”
- ▶ 54% of parents in a 2010 Pediatrics study had concerns about vaccine side effects



Even the entirely pro-vaccine can equivocate about schedule



- ▶ VFV survey of 100 pro-vaccine members asked agreement with statement: “I am against alternative vaccine schedules”
 - ▶ **18%** took a neutral stance
 - ▶ **7.44%** disagreed or strongly disagreed

How active are pro-vaccine parents?

- ▶ A survey on social media of 117 parents who consider themselves “pro-vaccine” found that while most are willing to engage others in immunization discussions, many are still hesitant about talking vaccines.
 - ▶ “I might correct a clearly wrong statement” **58% agreed**
 - ▶ “I will discuss vaccines with people I know whether or not we agree” **18% agreed**
 - ▶ “I avoid discussing vaccines to keep peace in personal relationships” **13% agreed**
 - ▶ “Whenever vaccines come up, I jump into the discussion” **10% agreed**

Vaccines and “neoliberal” mothers

- ▶ Vaccine refusing mothers see themselves as experts who can use specific, superior, parenting practices to mitigate risk and keep their children healthy and protected.



Jennifer A. Reich
Neoliberal Mothering and Vaccine Refusal: Imagined Gated
Communities and the Privilege of Choice *Gender & Society*
0891243214532711, first published on May 9, 2014
doi:10.1177/0891243214532711

Mothers are conditioned to take blame for illness

7. **Merely coming into contact with a "germ" isn't what makes people sick.**

We are [bombarded with bacteria and viruses all day long](#). People who get sick are those who have malfunctioning or immature immune systems, such as people who eat fake food, genetically modified food, have wrecked gut bacteria, take antibiotics, suffer from extreme stress, and children under the age of 3 who have immature immune systems. Children are supposed to get sick a few times a year; it's how they strengthen their immune systems for adulthood.

Parents do not enter the exam room alone

- ▶ Cultural expectations of motherhood, the belief in their personal expertise, and what they have been taught about how to protect their children from their personal networks and the internet inform their beliefs about vaccines before a child ever sees a doctor.



Why should you activate parents as partners?



- ▶ We spend a lot of effort trying to reach parents who do not vaccinate
 - ▶ Parents are already talking to each other
 - ▶ Parents are more likely to trust people they already know and like than organizations that seem faceless
- ▶ Parents are willing to do something if we give them something to do
 - ▶ Many parents are looking for a way to speak up

Determining who might be a partner in vaccine advocacy

- ▶ Provider conversations should not just focus on getting parents to vaccinate
 - ▶ Parents should be thanked for vaccinating their children on-time
 - ▶ Protecting their children
 - ▶ Creating healthier communities
- ▶ Invite parents to continue communicating after vaccine appointments
 - ▶ Consider setting up an email address dedicated to sharing ideas and concerns

The case for awareness events

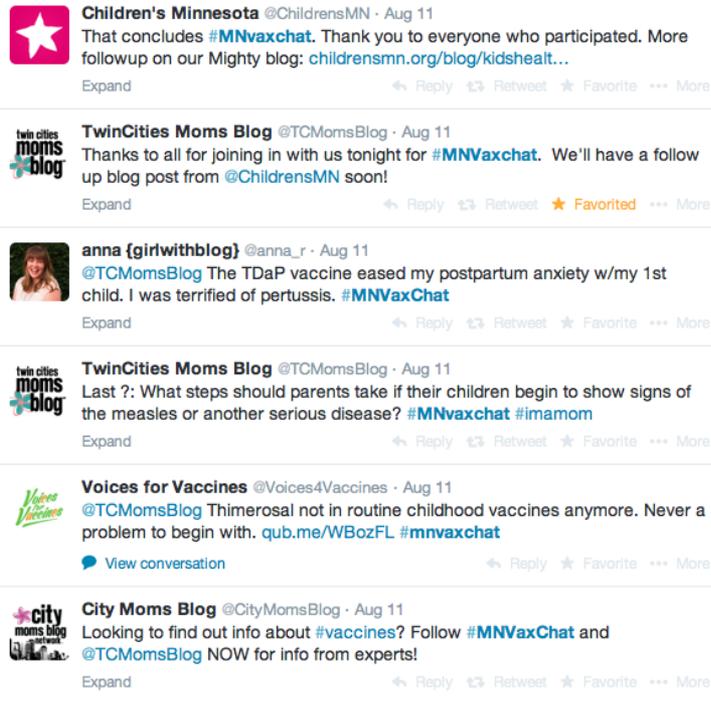
- ▶ Events aimed at increasing awareness of vaccines should be aimed at parents who already vaccinate as well
 - ▶ These events can help assuage invisible fears some vaccinating parents still have
 - ▶ They can also help give parents good information to share with their friends
 - ▶ Lastly, events can encourage parents to speak up and become important voices in their people networks

Event ideas

- ▶ Events should be focused around local community issues and values
 - ▶ Parents want to know about local outbreaks or people who have interesting stories to tell
- ▶ Film screenings are very popular
- ▶ Family events to thank parents for vaccinating will help children and families feel proud about protecting community health
- ▶ What would work in your community?

Savvy social media campaigns will invite parents in

- ▶ Parents making positive statements about vaccines on social media pages should be invited to further action



The screenshot shows a vertical thread of six tweets. Each tweet includes a profile picture, the user's name and handle, the date (Aug 11), and the text of the tweet. Below each tweet are icons for Reply, Retweet, Favorite, and More. The tweets are as follows:

- Children's Minnesota** (@ChildrensMN) · Aug 11: That concludes #MNVaxchat. Thank you to everyone who participated. More followup on our Mighty blog: childrensmn.org/blog/kidshealt...
- TwinCities Moms Blog** (@TCMomsBlog) · Aug 11: Thanks to all for joining in with us tonight for #MNVaxchat. We'll have a follow up blog post from @ChildrensMN soon!
- anna {girlwithblog}** (@anna_r) · Aug 11: @TCMomsBlog The TDaP vaccine eased my postpartum anxiety w/my 1st child. I was terrified of pertussis. #MNVaxChat
- TwinCities Moms Blog** (@TCMomsBlog) · Aug 11: Last ?: What steps should parents take if their children begin to show signs of the measles or another serious disease? #MNVaxchat #imamom
- Voices for Vaccines** (@Voices4Vaccines) · Aug 11: @TCMomsBlog Thimerosal not in routine childhood vaccines anymore. Never a problem to begin with. qub.me/WBozFL #mnvaxchat
- City Moms Blog** (@CityMomsBlog) · Aug 11: Looking to find out info about #vaccines? Follow #MNVaxChat and @TCMomsBlog NOW for info from experts!

Parents will naturally come to you via social media

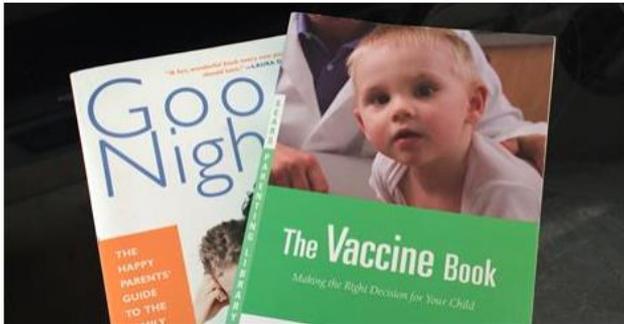


Nathan Boonstra, M.D.

February 9 at 4:39pm · Edited · 🌐

Colleagues I talk to are truly fed up with the antics of a small number of celebrity pediatricians who mislead the public about the importance and safety of vaccines. I talked with Tara Haelle, health journalist at Forbes, about this problem, as did several other concerned pediatricians.

http://www.forbes.com/.../sears-and-gordon-should-misleading...



Sears and Gordon: Should Misleading Vaccine Advice Have Professional Consequences?

In the midst of this measles outbreak, everyone has started talking about extreme anti-vaccine advocates (such as that crazy cardiologist in Arizona who I'm not...

FORBES.COM | BY TARA HAELLE

Like · Comment · Share



Libby Host Buchmeyer I wouldn't even be opposed to an alternative schedule if it helps assuage 'fear', but Sears himself admitted (in an interview I heard recently on NPR) that parents who choose an alternative schedule usually end up not vaccinating. I have several friends who are part of this group of over-educated WASP-y liberals who think their Google search is a suitable replacement for science and don't vaccinate. The phenomenon is interesting - particularly the intersection of liberals and conservatives who are distrustful of 'establishment' (for different reasons), but lead both groups not to vaccinate. I am a hard core skeptic. I don't reflexively believe everything I'm told. I am even willing to question relatively new science (i.e. GMO safety, etc.), but vaccines have YEARS of research to support them. I hope the Blank Clinic (if they don't already) enacts a policy to refuse to see un-vaccinated children unless there is a real reason to not vaccinate that child (genetic or medical issues that would prevent it).

Like · Reply · February 10 at 8:18am



Vicki Rich All of the parents i know who do not vaccinate their children have had at least one child have an adverse reaction to vaccines. I would have stopped vaccinating my children if they would have reacted badly as well.

Like · February 21 at 3:55pm



Nathan Boonstra, M.D. That's not the case for me. Most of the parents I know that do not vaccinate have done so with their first child, based on things they have read or heard that are generally not accurate. They are well-meaning and concerned, but unfortunately there is a... [See More](#)

Like · February 21 at 4:01pm

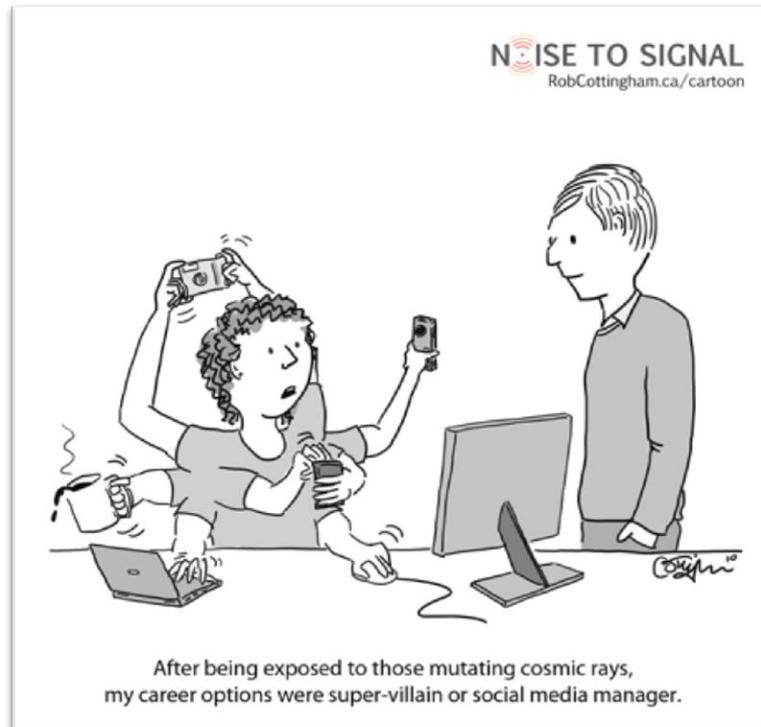


Libby Host Buchmeyer Dr. Boonstra, as an actual pediatrician who interacts with hundreds of children each week...how many cases of adverse reaction to vaccines have you seen? When Shea received her scheduled MMR, she did develop a fever and rash which we visited you about. If I recall, about 3% of kids will have a reaction to the measles vaccine because it is a live virus. But it was minor. How many vaccine 'injuries' do you think you've encountered over the years that had a significant impact on health or well-being beyond the minor ones like we encountered?

Like · 👍 1 · February 21 at 4:28pm · Edited

Once you have found parents, what are you going to do?

Are you too busy to keep vaccinating parents and potential advocates engaged in your community?



Parents can begin vaccine conversations

- ▶ Parents can simply be open and public about the fact that they vaccinate their children on-time
 - ▶ Social media “band-aid” or post-vaccine ice cream photos.
 - ▶ Telling other parents when their children have their vaccine appointments scheduled.
 - ▶ Provide children with “I’m vaccinated” stickers or pins

Parents can be awareness - raising partners

- ▶ VFV has toolkits for Parent Advocacy, and these can be done in partnership with providers and public health
- ▶ Parents can disseminate the information you want spread through their networks
- ▶ Parents can give you feedback about what they are seeing and hearing in their neighborhoods



Parents can be an asset in the media



The Green family (clockwise from top left): Colby, Harrison, Sonia, Davis, Langford and Holden. Holden, Harrison and Davis have an immune disorder that affects the body's ability to fight infections.

- ▶ When the media asks for comment, connect them to a vaccinating parent as well.
- ▶ Give parents templates to write to their local and neighborhood papers.
- ▶ Ask parents to make comments on media stories.

Give parents shareable content for social media

I cloth diaper and make baby food.
I'm as crunchy as they come.
But I damn sure vaccinate my kids!



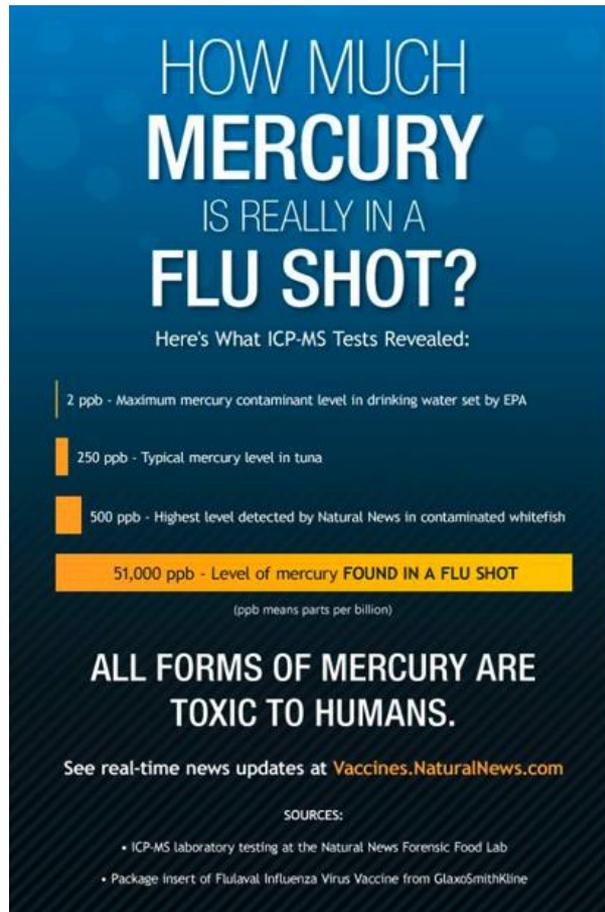
I'm a Hippy.
Not an idiot!



- ▶ Photos and infographics are very popular
- ▶ Blog posts and personal stories have an emotional appeal
- ▶ Being a trusted source for news stories means parents will turn to you for information and will spread that information

Social media is saturated with vaccine content

But not the kind of content we want



Invite parents to join parent advocacy group

- ▶ www.VoicesForVaccines.org/join-us



Ask parents to fill needs you have locally

- ▶ What is happening in your area that demands a vaccinating parents' action?
- ▶ How can you involve parents to meet this need?

For more information

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www.VoicesForVaccines.org

Toolkits

www.VoicesForVaccines.org/tools