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Young Adults More Likely to Say Vaccinating Kids Should Be a Parental Choice

Source: Monica Anderson/Pew Research Center/February 2, 2015

As the number of measles cases linked to the California outbreak climbs to over 100, health officials are urging parents to properly immunize their children, citing unvaccinated individuals as a main contributor to the disease's spread. Some have linked the outbreak to the anti-vaccination movement – a group whose members claim **vaccinations are unsafe and ineffective**.

A Pew Research Center report released last week shows that a majority of Americans say children should be required to get vaccinated. Further analysis of the survey data reveals significant age differences in views about vaccines. In 2009, by contrast, opinions about vaccines were roughly the same across age groups. Also, some modest partisan divisions have emerged since 2009, when Pew Research last polled on the issue.

Overall, 68% of U.S. adults say childhood vaccinations should be required, while 30% say parents should be able to decide. Among all age groups, young adults are more likely to say vaccinating children should be a parental choice. Some 41% of 18- to 29-year-olds say parents should be able to decide whether or not their child gets vaccinated; only 20% of adults 65 or older echo this opinion.

Older Americans are strong supporters of requiring childhood vaccinations – 79% say they hold that view, compared with 59% of those under 30. One possible reason that older groups might be more supportive of mandatory vaccinations is that many among them remember when diseases like measles were common. Prior to the first licensed measles vaccine in 1963, hundreds of thousands of measles cases were reported annually in the U.S. In 1958 alone, there were more than 750,000 cases. A decade later, in 1968, that number fell to about 22,000, according to an analysis of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Today, measles cases are extremely rare, but the CDC reported a spike in 2014, with more than 600 measles cases, the first such jump in more than a decade. The CDC attributed the increase to an outbreak among unvaccinated Ohio Amish communities and cases related to an outbreak in the Philippines.

Although some have linked the anti-vaccination movement to more-affluent, highly educated parents, Pew Research data show little difference in people's views based on income or education. About 30% of adults living in households earning \$75,000 or more a year say parents should decide whether or not their child gets vaccinated. This holds true even among the highest of earners (those in households making \$100,000 or more). These opinions are on par with people living in lower- and middle-income households.

Men and women share similar views on whether vaccines should be required or not and opinions on this issue vary little by race. At the same time, slightly more parents of minor children than those without children believe vaccinating children is a parental choice.

There are slight differences in views about vaccines along political lines. A majority of Democrats (76%), Republicans (65%) and independents (65%) say that vaccines should be required. But Republicans and independents are somewhat more inclined than are Democrats to say that parents should be able to decide. In 2009, there was no difference in views on vaccinations along party lines.

Dr. Sanjay Gupta: Vaccines Are a Matter of Fact

Source: CNN.com February 5, 2015

(CNN) Over the last few hours, I have started, scratched out and even abandoned the writing of this op-ed. I couldn't do it. It wasn't there. Didn't feel it.

Something kept nagging at me, and it wasn't until this very moment that I finally figured out what.

It's the idea that this article would be labeled "opinion" or "editorial" in the first place. Sure, there are some topics that seem to lend themselves appropriately to opinion pages:

The President's new budget.

The death penalty.

Is Tom Brady the greatest quarterback ever?

Vaccines, however, which have prevented 6 million deaths every year worldwide and have fundamentally changed modern medicine, should not be on that list.

The benefit of vaccines is not a matter of opinion. It is a matter of fact.

Studies, including a meta analysis of 1.2 million children this past December, show no link between vaccines and autism. That is not a matter of opinion. It is a matter of fact.

That you are 100 times more likely to be struck by lightning than to have a serious allergic reaction to the vaccine that protects you against measles is not a matter of opinion.

That is also a matter of fact.

Facts should matter, and science should win, but after 13 years as a medical reporter, I know it is not that simple. Science often loses the zeal argument to ideology, and in some ways it is easy to understand why.

At the heart of the vaccine argument is the awesome challenge of trying to prove a negative. If you or your child never gets the disease the vaccine was designed to prevent, there is no surprise. There is no headline. Life goes on.

The flip side, though, is the one in a million child (literally, 1/1,000,000) who has a serious adverse reaction. It is likely to make the news, confirm the worst fears and lead to the enlistment of an army in the fight against vaccines.

It is worth pointing out that 12 out of 10,000 people who take an aspirin are at risk of intracerebral hemorrhage, or bleeding in the brain. People who regularly take too much acetaminophen are the largest group of people hospitalized for acute liver failure. And, on average, one person in the United States dies every year from H2O intoxication, or drinking too much water. And yet, no armies have formed against aspirin, Tylenol or water.

David Katz, from Yale School of Public Health, wrote that it makes no more sense to rant against vaccines because you heard of someone who might have had an adverse reaction than to stop walking because you heard about a pedestrian struck by a car.

In many ways, it is a luxury to be able to have this discussion at all.

Having spent time in West Africa covering the Ebola outbreak, I saw how people hoped, wished and prayed for a vaccine -- to no avail.

On the other hand, the measles vaccine is readily available, and yet vaccination rates in certain areas of the United States are similar to the refugee camps I have visited in Haiti, Pakistan and Jordan. Yes, parents have a choice in this country.

It is a choice that so many others around the world will never have.

Of course I vaccinated my children. Didn't think twice. Not a big fan of the measles or mumps or rubella -- to name a few very preventable diseases.

And here is where I may lapse for a moment -- into opinion.

The anti-vaccination argument is often snugly wrapped in the "I love my kids" sentiment. And, I find it, well, a little insulting.

To suggest that anyone who vaccinates their kids doesn't love them is a whole new level of lunacy. But here is the fact of the matter, for me.

It's not just because I love my kids that I vaccinated them -- it's because I love your kids as well.

Possible Response Questions:

- Should vaccinations be mandatory, or should that decision be left up to parents? Explain.
- Select any passage and respond to it.